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SACERDOTAL SELF-FASHIONING: PRIESTHOOD IN THE POETRY OF ROBERT SOUTHWELL, S.J. AND JOHN DONNE

by

SCOTT R. PILARZ

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty in English in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

1996

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 1

1. Priests to the Temple: The Evolution of Sacerdotal Status 20

2. "Masse No More Messinges": Priesthood in Reformation Polemic 39

3. "The Saddest Bird a Season Finds to Sing":
Southwell's Poems of Sacramental Confidence and Self-Doubt 66

4. "Oh, to Vex Me, Contraryes Meet in One": Priesthood [Un]Donne 142

Conclusion 208

Bibliography 222

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Introduction

Any reading of church history, no matter how cursory, reveals that the issue of ministerial ordination has regularly generated anxiety among Christians. Acts 1:15-26 recounts the election "to ministry and apostleship" of Mathias, Judas Iscariot's successor; and this pre-Pentecost scene is rife with tension. The eleven apostles are hiding in Jerusalem, cursing Judas, who has forsaken his loyalties and betrayed his office. Peter does not mince words:

> [Judas] was numbered among us, and was allotted his share in this ministry. Now this man bought a field with the reward of his wickedness; and falling headlong he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known in Jerusalem, so that the field was called Akeldama. That is, Field of Blood. For it is written in the Book of Psalms, "Let his habitation become desolate, and let there be no one to live in it; and his office let another take." (Acts 1:17-20)

Subsequent history shows that Peter, eventually bishop of Rome, is only the first of many to occupy that See who will call down maledictions upon those who misuse or misappropriate ministerial office.[1]

Since the election of Mathias, promotion to what comes to be known as the

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[1] I do not mean to equate the ill-defined office to which Mathias is elected with what the Christian church will, over the course of two millenia, define (and redefine) as priesthood. The point is that there have been numerous debates about the nature and exercise of authority in the church dating from the days of the apostles, debates which often turn acrimonious. For a summary of these see Kevin B. Osborne's *Priesthood: The History of Ordained Ministry in the Catholic Church* .

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presbyterate has often proved a neuralgic issue in the church, and as recently as April 23, 1994, anxieties surrounding an ordination surfaced and circulated in the popular and religious press. The occasion was the ordination of Dr. Graham Leonard, the retired Anglican bishop of London, to the Roman Catholic priesthood.[2] In a conciliatory statement released by Cardinal Basil Hume after he had conferred orders on the former Anglican prelate, the work of the Church of England is recognized as "engendering a life of grace and giving access to the communion of salvation."[3] Hume wants to make it clear that Leonard's previous ministerial efforts are considered praiseworthy, even from a Roman perspective:

> No one who is considering full communion with the Roman church is ... expected to deny the value of the liturgical life they have celebrated in the Church of England, which has sustained them to this point. Rather, they are

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[2]This case is especially complicated. When Leonard was elevated to the See of London, some bishops of the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht participated in the Anglican episcopal ordination. Because Rome recognizes the validity of orders in this sect, it was judged that "there is a prudent doubt" concerning Leonard's canonical status. As a result, Vatican authorities instructed Hume to ordain Leonard "conditionally." As Hume explained, in a conditional ordination "the church prays that Almighty God will grant the candidate the grace of the Catholic priesthood in case he has not received it through his ordination celebrated in the Anglican communion." Had there been no Old Catholic bishops at Leonard's earlier ordination, his re-ordination would have been unconditional and absolutely necessary.

[3]Hume's statement is reprinted in *Origins: Catholic News Documentary Service* 23 (1994): 795. The Cardinal cites an earlier document released by the Catholic bishops of England and Wales which addressed "some widespread misunderstandings" about the ordination issue. The tone of the bishops' paper reflects the Second Vatican Council's Decree on Ecumenism which it quotes liberally to show how Rome now recognizes "that visible elements of the church of Christ can and do exist outside the boundaries of the Catholic church" (no. 22).

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> coming to recognize that it is through Christ's Catholic Church alone ...
> that the fullness of the means of salvation can be obtained.

Despite the characteristically post-Vatican II note struck in the Cardinal's press release, however, the re-ordination of Dr. Leonard served to fan the flames of a centuries-old controversy. Since the reign of Edward VI, the Catholic Church has judged Anglican orders to be "absolutely null and utterly void," and this verdict is reiterated, even if reluctantly, by Cardinal Hume.[4] After commending his colleagues in the Church of England for their good work, Hume gently reminds them of their sacramental deficiencies as defined in Roman Canon law:

> It is necessary to keep in mind that ordination conferred within the Anglican communion is judged invalid.... Consequently, since the church must be in no doubt of the validity of sacraments celebrated for the Catholic community, it must ask all who are chosen to exercise the priesthood in the Catholic church to accept sacramental ordination in order to fulfill their ministry and be integrated into the apostolic succession.

Underlying the Cardinal's explanation of the need for Leonard to be re-ordained to the priesthood after years of presiding at the Eucharist in the Church of England is a sixteenth-century Vatican ruling. Hume's press release and the range of responses which it

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[4]Hume's reluctance is related to his disappointment in the fact that the hopes engendered by the work of the Anglo-Catholic International Commission have not come to fulfillment. That commission was charged with establishing common ground in the areas of ministry and the Eucharist. After some initial success, its efforts have been adversely affected by a number of factors, not the least of which is the decision on the part of the Anglican church to ordain women.

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provoked evince the fact that deep-seated ordination anxieties dating from the age of Robert Southwell and John Donne still color Anglo-Roman Catholic relations.[5]

In what follows I will show how these two ordained ministers, Southwell, a Roman Catholic and a member of the Society of Jesus, and Donne, an Anglican, were aware of and affected by such anxieties and that their poems are "sites of institutional and ideological contestation," where theologically-generated tensions get encoded.[6] For a variety of documentable reasons, similar and otherwise, these two men fashion themselves as priests at a point in church history when that position is particularly tenuous. I want to examine the conditions surrounding those acts, at once priestly and poetic, by which Southwell and Donne sought to establish "a sense of personal order, a characteristic mode of address to the world, [and] a structure of bounded desires." As Stephen Greenblatt points out, "there is in the early modern period a change in the intellectual, social,

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[5]I use the word "anxiety" quite deliberately. In his biography of John Calvin, William Bouwsma admits that while "all human beings may be anxious; some, individually, in groups, and from time to time, are more anxious than others." He precedes to point out how the age of religious reform is one such especially anxious era. Typical of his contemporaries, Calvin was "driven by anxieties through a career of strenuous and distinguished accomplishment, and [anxiety] found expression in his thought in ways of which he could scarcely have been conscious." I would contend that like Calvin, Southwell and Donne were "unusually sensitive to anxiety, that of others as well as [their] own." They "brooded over it, and much of what [they] had to say was consciously intended to soothe a peculiarly anxious generation." Bouwsma argues that "nothing bound Calvin more closely to his time than his anxiety," and that, as a result, "he offers the historian ... a unique opportunity to study the inner turmoil of a peculiarly troubled age" (32). I hope to show how the same is equally true of the two poets treated here.

[6]This is the case despite the fact that both, at times, felt moved or obliged to serve as official spokesmen for powerful institutions. As Greenblatt notes, "even those literary texts that sought most ardently to speak for a monolithic power could be shown as sites of institutional and ideological contestation" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 2-3).

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psychological, and aesthetic structures that govern the generation of identities" (*Self-Fashioning* 1). Religious doctrine and practice are specifically numbered by Greenblatt among those structures that were subject to significant shifts during the Renaissance, and Southwell and Donne, caught up as they were in contemporary theological conflict, experienced these changes in particularly profound ways. Regarding priesthood, then, their poetry can be read as an "achievement out of conflict." Insofar as the nature and function of ordained ministry were hotly debated in their day, readers can approach their work as "the accumulated record of the most passionate controversies."[7]

Before situating these two poetry-writing priests in the context of early modern debates about ordained ministry, some discussion of methodology is warranted. The very title of this dissertation shows my theoretical hand, and in that regard I want to underscore and appropriate the epistemological humility which I find to be true of, and attractive about, New Historicism.[8] Along with others whose aim it is to "track what can only be glimpsed ... at the margins of the text," I admit from the start that I harbor no illusions that an understanding of priesthood in the poetry of Southwell and Donne in any way provides for "a unified interpretive vision of all their discreet perceptions" (Greenblatt,

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[7]"The Tempest Surrounding Stephen Greenblatt," *New York Times Magazine* 28 March 1993 (36).

[8]I employ this terminology fully aware of, and in agreement with, Louis Montrose's assertion that the New Historicism does not "designate any agreed upon intellectual and institutional program": "There has been no coalescence of the various identifiably New Historicist practices into a systematic and authoritative paradigm for the interpretation of Renaissance texts; nor does the emergence of such a paradigm seem either likely or desirable" (Montrose 18). Joel Fineman also speaks to this point, noting New Historicism's "programmatic refusal to specify a methodological program for itself" (52).

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Negotiations 4). By the same token, I do not mean to suggest that the church and developments therein are to be taken for a synecdoche of early modern culture. Priesthood, in particular, and religion in general, as significant as they may be, are merely two of the many "genres and modes of discourse, ... social institutions and non-discursive practices" among which canonical Renaissance literary works need to be "resituated."[9] This is necessarily the case if we want to understand the early modern "social networks" within which "individual subjectivities and collective structures [were] mutually and continuously shaped" (Montrose 15-16). To assert otherwise would amount to what William Bouwsma calls "reductionism in the interpretation of human beings." In warning against this scholarly temptation, Bouwsma cites Montaigne, "whose awareness of inconstancy and unpredictability may have been particularly appropriate to his own century" (230):[10]

> In view of the natural instability of our conduct and opinions, it has often seemed to me that good authors are wrong to insist on fashioning a consistent and solid fabric out of us. They choose one general characteristic and go and arrange and interpret all a man's actions to fit their picture; and

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[9]I need not belabor the significance of religion in early modern life. As simply put by Richard Helgerson in *The Forms of Nationhood*, "In sixteenth-century England there was very little to which religion was irrelevant" (251).

[10]Bouwsma is quoting from "De l'inconstance de nos actions," *Essais* II, 1-2, as translated by Donald Frame. He also notes a similar antipathy toward reductionism in Calvin's "Augustinian awe before the unfathomable depth of the personality." Calvin proposed that, "because the recesses of hearts are so hidden, no human being is qualified to judge another." Bouwsma proposes that "this sense of complexity hints at an awareness, increasingly reflected in the art and literature of the Renaissance, of the infinite possibilities of the human condition" (133).

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> if they cannot twist them enough, they go and set them down to dissimulation.

At the start, then, I confess that my vision of these men and their works is fragmentary. I do not want to "twist" them or their words to give the impression that a consideration of priesthood alone provides me with a lens for seeing clearly what my critical predecessors have viewed only "through a glass, darkly." Nor do I want to write a literary biography in either the traditionally historical or psychoanalytic mode. Notwithstanding the limitations inherent in an admittedly fragmentary vision, however, I hold out hope for some significant satisfaction. My conviction is that this study of sacerdotal self-fashioning yields "insight into the half-hidden cultural transactions" through which the poetry of Southwell and Donne is "empowered" (Greenblatt, *Negotiations* 4). Furthermore, I want to make a case that the polemics and poetry of priesthood during this period "draw into themselves a wildly problematic and complex range of cultural issues," and that they are "haunted by questions of selfhood." Because issues surrounding ministerial identity and function are so charged with social energies, when they feature in the theological and devotional writings of the period, they "shape ... early modern constructions of ideal subjectivity" by "supply[ing] the primary language for the profoundly divergent Reformed and Catholic models of Christian selfhood" (Shuger, *Bible* 9).

I also want to acknowledge that I am aware of how my "analyses and ... understanding necessarily proceed from [my] own historically, socially, and institutionally shaped vantage point" (Montrose 23). As Stephen Greenblatt observes, "the questions I

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ask of my material and indeed the very nature of the material are shaped by the questions I ask of myself" (*Self-Fashioning* 5). It is inevitable that certain factors, not the least of which are my own religious origins and affiliations, "complicate" my "participation in the cultural and ideological tradition enshrined in the works which [I] study." Acknowledging these factors, I will yet aim to avoid the "compensatory embrace" of my own tradition, as well as any "contestatory attitudes" towards Anglicanism. At the same time, having admitted these potential pitfalls, perhaps it may be the case that my own experience of ordained ministry will afford me a particular and productive "vantage point for the appropriation and critique not only of [these] Renaissance texts but also of the interpretive norms of Renaissance studies" (Montrose 25).

This project is meant to be part of an effort recently launched by scholars who "call for the re-evaluation" of what has been for some time "the most marginalized aspect of literature," namely religion (Benson 1). Such a re-evaluation, of course, requires a commitment to understanding an author's faith on its own terms and for the sake of appreciating what it reveals about "the uniqueness and alterity of other cultures and times." My goal, then, is not "to promote piety," however much that may have been the aim of at least one of the authors whom I consider, but "to provoke more critical analysis of the rich intellectual and literary issues" that circulate and surface in early modern poems by and about priests (Benson 7). In her recent book, *The Renaissance Bible*, Debora Shuger describes a motive that I take to be much like my own. She describes herself as "a Christian and an academic" who has "no idea how to put these two together," but who struggles, nevertheless, "to formulate a language that would be both reverent and

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professional" (1). In the course of her struggle, she has observed that "Renaissance scholarship, ... for complex political, ideological, and institutional reasons, brackets off religious materials from cultural analysis, and vice versa" (2). Traditionally, according to Shuger, Renaissance scholarship has "focused on the unidirectional influence" of Classical antiquity on secular culture and, more recently, on "the passage of sacred forms and practices ... into the social and literary forms of [that] culture" (3). Shuger's criticism of the work of her colleagues is an apt estimation of the efforts of many:

> If the first model tends to marginalize religion, the second conceptualizes the sacred as that which is drained, is emptied out, in order to provide modern culture with sufficient intellectual and symbolic capital to start up its own economy. (3)

I aim to avoid these tendencies, both of which obscure the historical and intellectual context of Renaissance religious literature. I want to study these texts "for the lively contentions which they embrace," and to appreciate how arguments about ordained ministry are among the liveliest of these (Strohm x).

In organizing my research I have surveyed significant scholarship on early modern literature, concentrating on the works of those who are more or less comfortable with the label "New Historicist." One such critic, Paul Strohm, is typically more interested in politics and economics than he is in theology, but what he writes of developments in those spheres is, I think, equally applicable to developments in Renaissance religion:

> These developments required modification of a system in which loyalties were defined.... Part of this shift occurs within the textual realm; within the

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> realm, that is, of imaginative productions through which people become aware of conflict and fight it out. (x)

The following is constructed with an eye toward reading several "imaginative productions" as sites where Southwell and Donne enter "not just into reproduction, but into analysis, negotiation, and reconstrual of the [religious] materials they take in hand" (Strohm xii).

If early modern developments in religion "require the modification of a system in which loyalties are defined," then a convincing case can be made that few issues in the Renaissance proved as controversial as that of ordination to the priesthood. When Southwell and Donne offered themselves as candidates for orders in either the Roman Catholic or the Anglican church, each was declaring his loyalty to one or another side in an obviously - and sometimes literally - explosive conflict. For Southwell and Donne, these declarations came at great personal and/or political expense. Their experiences of the rapid and radical changes characteristic of ecclesiastical constructs in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries cause these two priests to question the nature of sacerdotal selfhood, as well as the nature and purpose of religious poetry, even as they fashion both. Ultimately, however, I am concerned with more than "the inner lives of [these poets] for their own sake." I also hope to contribute in some way to the "illumin[ation] of the momentous cultural crisis ... which was at the heart of the Renaissance as well as of the Reformation and as crucial for Catholic Europe as for the peoples that separated from the Roman church." The approach is "by way of tensions and contradictions," and the goal is as much to "scrutinize [these men] in order to understand the time as to scrutinize the time

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in order to understand [these men]" (Bouwsma, *Calvin* 4-5).

Before taking up such "scrutiny" of the social networks in which these poets lived and wrote, more needs to be said about the term "self-fashioning" and the way in which it is used here. I am obviously indebted to Stephen Greenblatt and his 1980 book on More, Spenser, Wyatt, Marlowe, Shakespeare, and Tyndale. Like Greenblatt, I acknowledge that the project of shaping oneself within a system of checks and constraints does not "spring from nowhere when 1499 becomes 1500" (*Self-Fashioning* 1). In fact, I am increasingly aware of how a distinction between things "medieval" as opposed to "Renaissance" is less than hard and fast, let alone helpful. This is particularly the case, I think, with regard to Southwell and Donne, both of whom inherit and negotiate much that is traditionally considered to be characteristic of the culture of the middle ages; and that they do so makes them particularly apt subjects for a study in self-fashioning. Greenblatt observes how the most interesting and instructive examples of persons engaged in the "artful" process of imposing a shape upon themselves are precisely those found in the middle of many things.[11] In light of their positions in society, poised between various opposing cultural forces, Southwell and Donne can "express in literary works more powerful than any produced by their contemporaries the historical pressure of an unresolved and continuing conflict" (*Self-Fashioning* 8).

On account of their religious struggles and commitments, Southwell and Donne

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[11]This same insight is confirmed by Veeser when he observes that "hovering in its own borderland between text and material context, ... between literature and non-literature, ... New Historicism has gravitated in its studies to the go-betweens, middlemen, long-distance traders, translators, and cultural brokers" (*The New Historicism Reader* 4).

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are "displaced in significant ways from a stable, inherited social world." Both are estranged from family and friends. Both endure exile, either internal or external; and both ultimately submit to some absolute authority outside themselves even as they make an effort to exercise agency. As a result, both experience a significant sense of loss.[12] All of this serves to convince me that they deserve to be numbered among the "handful of arresting figures who ... both reward intense, individual attention and promise access to larger cultural patterns" (*Self-Fashioning* 6). Like the men whom Greenblatt studies, Southwell and Donne "drive themselves to the most sensitive regions of their culture," and their priesthood makes them particularly aware of the various constraints that govern the construction of identity. As ordained ministers, their words are obviously "embedded in specific communities, life situations, [and] structures of power." As poets who fashion themselves priests in an era marked by religious controversy, they cannot help but produce "resonant texts" which are "the focal point[s] for converging lines of force in sixteenth [and seventeenth] century culture" (5). Their poems, then, illustrate how "fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions - family, religion, state - [are] inseparably intertwined" (256).

For the most part, I will limit my study of the "resonant texts" produced by Southwell and Donne to poetic works which deal with the nature and purpose of priesthood. When these verses benefit from being read against the background of their prose, I will employ letters, diaries, and sermons. Frequently, I will introduce theological

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[12]For an extended discussion of the "governing conditions" relevant to *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* see Greenblatt 9.

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works into my reading of the poems, and in doing so I am again following the lead of Greenblatt and other New Historicists who insist that we must "investigate both the social presence to the world of the literary text and the social presence of the world in the literary text" (*Self-Fashioning*). We cannot simply seal off one type of discourse from another if we are to appreciate how "great art is an extraordinarily sensitive register of the complex struggles and harmonies of a culture" (5). When Southwell and Donne put pen to paper in an effort to fashion themselves as priests, they were not engaged in what Donne might call "a dialogue of one" ("The Extasie" 74). Even while Donne employs poetry as a means of self-exploration, writing is for him, as it is for all of us, a social moment, dependent upon a particular community. As priests, Southwell and Donne were rather conspicuous members of communities of believers. They were in deep and almost constant conversation with the major spokesmen for the Christian tradition, both living and dead. There is no understanding their poetry, much less their priesthood, apart from this conversation. It is hardly the case that the poems considered here were written in splendid isolation, and it would be irresponsible to read them as if they were.

Finally, I want to admit the extent to which my understanding of the history of the church in England and of the role of the Society of Jesus in that history is influenced by the work of Christopher Haigh, Eamon Duffy, and John O'Malley. The works of all three have helped me to see the limitations of both the hagiographical and the Whiggish approaches to Reformation and Counter-Reformation studies. While these historians have hardly made my task less complicated, they have encouraged me to recognize and wrestle with the complexities which colored the experiences of Southwell and Donne. As will

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become obvious, Haigh and Duffy provide a rich background against which these two poets can be seen in the particular context of an England undergoing a series of protracted, piecemeal reformations, both political and religious. It is impossible to read their accounts of the effects of such reformations on ordinary Englishmen and their parishes and not conclude that there was a great deal to be anxious about between the reign of Henry VIII and that of James I. If artisans and merchants registered such anxiety even at a relatively safe remove from the thick of theological controversy, how much more must Southwell and Donne have been aware of it? Haigh and Duffy stand out among the several historians who in recent years have stressed the tenacity with which Englishmen clung to "the Old Religion," especially during the reign of Elizabeth.[13] In doing so they are challenging the widely-held assumptions articulated by A.G. Dickens, who traced the lasting influence of proto-reformers in England, especially the Lollards, and pronounced the triumph of Protestantism under Elizabeth as all but inevitable. Haigh and Duffy present evidence which undermines Dickens's conclusion that "few revolutions have been more dramatic and momentous than that of [the Elizabethan Settlement], yet none has encountered more feeble opposition" (349). My reading of the lives and works of Southwell and Donne will show that Dickens may be right about the drama. Regarding the strength of the opposition, however, his thinking seems wishful, if not naive. Haigh, Duffy,

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[13]Others who advocate a similar stance include J.J. Scarisbruck (*The Reformation and the English People*. Oxford, 1984) and R.N. Swanson (*Church and Society in Late Medieval England*. Oxford, 1989). After a careful presentation of evidence pertaining to particular localities, the same position is also taken by Robert Whiting in *The Blind Devotion of the People: Popular Religion and the English Reformation*. Cambridge, 1989.

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and others of like mind provide a more correct, albeit a more complex, context for understanding religion in early modern England.[14]

John O'Malley's recently published history of the first generation of Jesuits, perhaps more than any other secondary source, has caused me to rethink the life and works of Robert Southwell as well as the nature and purpose of the English Mission in which he played so important a part. O'Malley is more concerned with Jesuit practices than with Jesuit personalities and, as a result, has made a rather clean break with the kind of scholarship heretofore typical of in-house historians. Histories of the English Mission, which eventually became the English Province, have multiplied since 1598 when the Superior General of the Society, Claudio Acquaviva, ordered that careful records be kept in each region where Jesuits worked. The first major work of this kind was published in 1660 by Henry More, the second provincial of the English Jesuits. A second, based on the papers of Robert Parsons, appeared seven years later by an Italian, Daniello Bartoli. In the 1880's Henry Foley's monumental *Records of the English Province of the Society of Jesus* appeared in eight volumes, and as will become obvious, this collection remains an invaluable source.

In response to various polemics against the English Jesuits at the turn of the century, several members of the Society weighed in with their own pious versions of events of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Both the attacks and the defenses make

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[14]For an overview of debates about the origins of and influences on the English Reformation(s), see Rosemary O'Day, *The Debate on the English Reformation* (London 1986) especially chapters 5 and 6, pp. 102-65, and Diarmaid MacCulloch, "The Myth of the English Reformation," *Journal of British Studies* 30 (1991) 1-19.

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for enjoyable reading, especially for those with a taste for invective, and a typical example of the latter is John H. Pollen's *The English Catholics in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth: A Study of Their Politics, Civil Life, and Government.* These anecdotal histories celebrating the sanctity and smarts of the first generations of English Jesuits culminate in Bernard Basset's *The English Jesuits* which was published in 1968. Basset, like his predecessors, concentrates on the lives of individual members of the Society without providing much in the way of contextualization. I hope to employ O'Malley's insights to go part of the way in compensating for this lack.[15]

In the Introduction to *The First Jesuits* O'Malley addresses the tension between hagiography and historiography, and he claims his turf:

> Much popular writing on the Society of Jesus, whether favorable or unfavorable, has been woefully inadequate. Scholarly articles and monographs of reliable quality appear each year, although perhaps not in the quantity one might expect. Until relatively recently practically all the scholarship came from Jesuits. Generally characterized by technical accuracy, it tended to take up familiar and even familial issues and was relatively unaffected by the new historiography. Even today this scholarship is not always free of hagiographical vestiges, especially when dealing with

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[15]As I write this, the Archivist of the English Province, Thomas McCoog, is finishing his own multi-volume history of the Society in Britain. His work, which many await with anticipation, argues that events, especially religious events, in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England cannot be understood in isolation, but need to be considered in the bigger picture which includes Scotland and Ireland. More than any of his predecessors, McCoog is interested in the relationship between events in England and those on the continent.

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> Ignatius, for whom we still await a biography that satisfies sophisticated canons of scholarship. (2)

What is true of the Society's founder is even more the case in regard to its sixteenth-century poet-saint.[16] With a very few notable exceptions, books and articles on Southwell have tended toward the pious and have largely ignored his poetry, except to mention that he wrote it while on the run from priest-hunting pursuivants. As a result of O'Malley's influence, I will consider his poetry in the context of the Society's "Institute," by which Jesuits mean "the way they live and work, and thus they include in the term all the official documents of the order." Also, as O'Malley himself notes, "another cherished expression practically synonymous with Institute is 'our way of proceeding' (*noster modus procedendo, nuestro modo de proceder*)" (8). It is my contention that Southwell's poems are a response to and a reflection upon "our way of proceeding" as this was understood by members of the English mission at the end of the sixteenth century. In *The First Jesuits*, O'Malley attempts to reconfigure the self-understanding of Ignatius and his companions through a consideration of their various activities. When I had the good fortune to study with him at the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, O'Malley would often repeat this methodological mantra: "If you want to know *who* the Jesuits were, find out *what* they did and *why* they did it." I will apply this axiom in my study of Robert Southwell and, by extension, in my study of John Donne as well.

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[16]Following O'Malley's lead, I will not make much of Southwell's "conspicuous sanctity." I should note, however, that he was canonized along with Edmund Campion and the twenty-six other English Martyrs on October 25, 1970. His feast is celebrated on December 1.

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These two priests were attempting to make sense and find meaning for themselves and their communities in the midst of "a see-saw of Reformation and Counter-Reformation" (Haigh 214).[17] Their poems give us some privileged access to "that most human of regions *between* an event and a reaction to it - the place where the event is privately composed, made sense of, the place where it actually becomes an event for that person" (Kegan 2). Southwell and Donne experienced the events of what Haigh calls collectively "the English Reformations," that series of sometimes obvious, sometimes almost imperceptible changes in ecclesiastical and political structures that began as Henry VIII was ending his marriage to Katherine of Aragon. In undertaking this study of the various experiences of Southwell and Donne in the midst of these changes, I am conscious of Aldous Huxley's observation, "Experience is not what happens to you, it's what you *do* with what happens to you." Obviously, an awful lot "happens" to Southwell and Donne on their way to becoming and as a result of their being priests. In the following, I explore what they *do* with the data of experience, especially sacerdotal experience, as they fashion themselves in their poems.

Stephen Greenblatt concludes his study of *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* on a rather personal note, recounting an experience he had on a flight from Baltimore to Boston. What he does with that experience is to write about it in terms of how it helped

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[17]Haigh notes two repercussions of this "see-saw." He claims that it made for "divided parishes" on account of liturgical confusion, and, more importantly for the process of self-fashioning, it "must have promoted cynicism and a suspicion that the niceties of belief and ritual could not matter much when they were so easily altered" (214). In subsequent chapters I will consider how Southwell and Donne might have been personally affected by such cynicism and suspicion and how they wrestle with these reactions in their verse.

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him realize that "fashioning oneself and being fashioned by cultural institutions ... were inseparably intertwined" (256). If Greenblatt can be forgiven for striking a note of confessional intimacy at the end of his work, then I ask for a similar kind of critical absolution at the beginning of mine. When I took up this project, I intended to maintain what I assumed was the necessary and proper scholarly indifference toward my subjects. This has proven far more difficult than I imagined. Greenblatt accounts for his critical efforts as a result of his long-held "desire to speak with the dead." I have discovered that this kind of conversation can upset academic equilibrium, especially when the dead in question have "contrived to leave textual traces of themselves [which are] uncannily full of the will to be heard" (*Shakespearean Negotiations* 1). In the literature that they have left behind, as in the lives that they led, Southwell and Donne show themselves to be very willful.

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1. Priests to the Temple: The Evolution of Sacerdotal Status

This chapter is born of a desire to appreciate something of how Southwell and Donne understood the nature and evolution of the office to which they were ordained. For the sake of understanding the Reformation-era anxieties which they experienced along with many of their colleagues, it is also important to assess the status of the priestly office at the start of the sixteenth century. As that office, in its various forms, is almost as old as the church itself, there is a temptation to take a long view of its history. Sufficient for the purposes of this project, however, is a rather brief sketch, highlighting those issues which will come to the fore during Reformation-era debates, namely the social as well as canonical character of priesthood and how that character is related to the theory and practice of the traditional sacraments for Roman Catholics of communion and confession. These are the issues that circulate and surface most conspicuously in the poems which will be considered in subsequent chapters. What I am attempting is not so much a source study or a reconstruction of the theological reading done by the two poets in question. While that might be a project of some merit, I aim to make it clear that these two men were not simply receptacles for the latest in theological thinking, whether Roman or Reformed. Each of them had a good grasp of, and high regard for, patristic theology. And even if Donne might come to claim that "the medieval era was a period where theology was corrupted by pagan philosophy," he was certainly shaped by the Scholastic legacy (Trueman 53).

The origins, evolution, and theological interpretation of ordained ministry in the

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Catholic church are complicated. Scholars who seek to understand the rise of the presbyterate need to begin with an account of priesthood in the religion of Israel. In and of itself, this is a daunting exegetical task, but only such a reading of Old Testament sources can provide the necessary background for situating Christian ministry in its earliest contexts. The first generation of Christian ministers fashioned themselves in terms of the structures of self-understanding available to them through their experience of temple and synagogue worship. From the start, the issue of authentic and legitimate leadership was problematic. There were tensions among "wandering charismatics" in Palestine; in the Jerusalem church, where the parties of James and Stephen came into conflict; and within the communities established by St. Paul. In each case, a particular style of leadership was prescribed.

These tensions eventually resulted in a crisis for early Christians, who needed leaders to guide them through a series of cataclysmic events, including the fall of Jerusalem, the delay of the Parousia, and the death of the "first witnesses" who had enjoyed special intimacy with Jesus. Out of this unsettling era came "the development of a specialized vocabulary of ordained ministry ("orders," "holy orders"), as well as the doctrine that ordination is a 'sacrament,' parallel in nature and effects to baptism" (Mitchell 13-14). This notion, which will be particularly problematic for John Donne, was first articulated by St. Augustine of Hippo (d. 430) in response to Donatist heretics. At stake in the controversy was the question of whether a person who had been baptized, confirmed, or ordained prior to falling into heresy or schism would need to receive any or all of these sacraments again upon repenting and returning to the church. Augustine's

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response, which eventually won wide acceptance, was that an "indelible character" is conferred in these sacraments:

> When a man was enrolled into the Roman army in St. Augustine's day, a mark was branded on his body. This mark was called the military *character* - a mark entitling its bearer to serve as a soldier and engage in warfare, and a sign by which his quality of soldier could be verified if ever called into doubt (e.g., if he deserted). [Ordination] confers a similar mark or character upon the souls of those who receive it. Just as a civilian was given the status, rights, and duties of a soldier when he received the military character, so a person receives ... status, rights, and duties ... when he receives the [presbyteral] character. (Bligh 3)

As a corollary to this understanding of the permanent nature of ordination, the church taught that "sacramental characters can give power to perform validly acts which those who have not the character cannot do validly" (Bligh 7).[18] This issue of the valid exercise of presbyteral power will loom large during the Reformation.

These decisive theological developments can be summarized as "the triumph of sacerdotalism":

> By the end of the fourth century sacerdotalism had become the ordinary

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[18]Bligh points out that the Council of Trent affirmed that the three sacramental characters are indelible, and he also argues that "it would certainly be rash to restrict this indelibility to the present life": Some people have thought that the characters will vanish in the next life, because they will no longer have any purpose: the powers signified by them will there have no opportunity for exercise. But St. Thomas gives a simple and sufficient answer to this argument when he says that the characters will remain "in the elect for their greater honor and in the damned for their greater shame"(7).

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> mode of speaking of the Christian clergy, temple terms replacing those of the synagogue.... Christian episcopals became high priests, presbyters became priests, deacons Levites, the eucharistic banquet a sacrifice on a table that is now an altar in a sanctuary, the Holy of Holies of the New Israel. (Mohler 104)

Concomitantly, there is a shift in emphasis in regard to what the ordained did for those in their care. As a result of "increasing ritualism," preaching the word surrendered pride of place to liturgical performance. "More and more," as James Mohler points out, "the Christian minister returns to the form of the pagan and Jewish priest, as a sacred person skilled in liturgical rites, a mediator between God and man" (104).[19] For example, the earliest extant prayers of presbyteral ordination "mention the power of consecration [of the Eucharist] only indirectly." It was rather the case that "presbyters were looked upon primarily as rulers and guides of the church and models of Christian virtue" (Bligh 19). As the ordination rite developed, however, "more and more emphasis was placed on the sacramental powers of the priesthood - first on the power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass, and later on the power of absolution" (Bligh 35). Beginning with St. Ambrose (d. 397), ordination comes to be associated with the power of the priest to consecrate the

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[19]Regarding this rise in sacerdotalism, it is important to note that from the fifth century onward the presbyters took to wearing special clothing even when they were not officiating or participating in liturgical events, thus separating themselves symbolically from the laity (Osborne 146). On the same score, in his analysis of early ministry, Bernard Cooke writes: "The distinction of the clergy from the laity was greatly abetted, sociologically and psychologically, by the treatment given to the clergy by the civil power. As part of his support for the church, Constantine granted to the clergy (at least those directly and professionally concerned with worship) exemption from civil and military service, from subjection to the civil courts, and from taxation" (559).

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matter of the sacrament, the bread and wine, and this consecration subsequently replaces consumption as the focus of Eucharistic piety and practice.[20] Along with this focus, the sacrificial nature of the sacrament is increasingly emphasized. In opposition to earlier traditions, Ambrose and those who come after him tended to conceive "not so much of the Church's offering of itself in union with Christ" as they "think of the priest who offers the sacrifice of Christ present in the Host, on behalf of the people":

> Now has the shadow of night and Jewish darkness passed away, and the day of the Church has come.... We have seen the High Priest coming to us; we have seen and heard him offering for us his blood; we priests, as we are able, follow, that we may offer sacrifice for the people, though weak in our deserts yet honorable by our sacrifice. (Dugmore 21)[21]

If ordained ministry is to be understood as a cultural construct involved in " the generation of identities" and as a contributing factor to "a system of meanings that creates specific individuals by governing the passage from abstract potential to concrete historical embodiment," then it is important to note a social and psychological phenomenon that

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[20]Dugmore points to the emergence of a "new theology of eucharistic presence" which holds that the sacrament is "perfected by consecration and not by use: the consecrating priest is all important, but the faithful communicant is not necessary for a valid Mass" (56-58).

[21]In the middle ages, this emphasis on the Eucharist as sacrifice is informed by the work of St. Anselm of Canterbury (d.1109). He understood salvation in terms of a debt-satisfaction theory of atonement, a theory shaped by the feudal system. Only the sacrifice of Christ on the cross could satisfy the debt that sinners had incurred. The offense of original sin was against an infinite God, therefore finite beings could never satisfy the debt themselves. Only infinite satisfaction would do, and only God himself could provide it. That priests were necessary for the extension of this sacrifice in time through the sacrament of the Eucharist obviously increased their importance.

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occurs at this juncture in the evolution of the presbyterate (Greenblatt, *Self-Fashioning* 2-3). There is a growing sense of isolation about the *sacerdos*. This, of course, is compounded by the requirement of celibacy which was imposed on Latin-rite clergy in the twelfth century as a way of dealing with the problem of alienation of church property. As a result, as Richard McBrien notes, "priesthood became even more of a caste-like existence within the church" (805). The priest comes to be thought of as one set apart, one for whom certain occupations and activities are unworthy:

> As sacerdotalism increased the gulf tended to widen between the clergy and the laity, the cleric and the world. Whereas the elders of the synagogue had been near the people, the Jewish priests were remote. Hence when the Christian presbyters assumed the dignity and otherworldliness of the Jewish priesthood, they tended to move farther from the world of the laity. (Mohler 105).

This isolation, born of claims to exalted cultic status, continues to be characteristic of priesthood up to the time of the Reformation. Until efforts at undermining clerical "rank" were begun by Luther and Calvin, ordained ministers simultaneously enjoyed and were burdened by superhuman expectations, and these were usually associated with proximity to the Eucharist.[22] Typical of the way in which such status was created and enforced is a

[22]That priests were ambivalent about these expectations is a point made by Keith Thomas in *Religion and the Decline of Magic*. Thomas notes how most of the "magical claims" made for and about priests were "parasitic" to the church's teachings and "were more or less vigorously refuted by ecclesiastical leaders" (46). On occasions when officials were less than vigorous in their refutations, Thomas suggests they were motivated by self-interest: "The leaders of the church thus abandoned the struggle against superstition whenever it seemed in their interest to do so.... If a belief in the magical efficacy of the

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telling passage from St. John Chrysostom (d. 549):

> And whenever he invokes the Holy Spirit and offers the most dread sacrifice, and constantly handles the common Lord of all, tell me what rank shall we give him? What great purity? And what real piety must we demand of him? For consider what manner of hands that ought to be which minister in these things, and what kind his tongue which utters such words, and ought not the soul which receives so great a spirit be purer and holier than anything in the world?[23] (*On the Priesthood* 3, 4-6)

The social isolation of the priest, which has its roots in the Patristic church, only grows as the role of the local bishop diminishes during the middle ages. Whereas early on most liturgical functions belonged to the *episcopos*, by the Carolingian era parish priests were performing the sacred rites on their own. Valid ordination still came through a bishop, of course, but appointment to benefices was in the hands of laymen to whom presbyters were subsequently beholden. Since bishops could exercise less and less control over their clergy, "the priest liturgically, administratively, [and] educationally became for all practical purposes the major spiritual leader of the local community" (Osborne 172). The result, as O.M. Dalton observes, was that "the position of the country parson with

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Host served to enhance respect for the clergy ... , then why should it not be tacitly tolerated?" (49). Lay people, too, had mixed emotions on the same score. As Peter Marshall observes, "the interplay between a sacramental theology which accorded priests both elevated status and great responsibility, and the practical way in which their ministry was performed and received must have generated rather ambivalent attitudes" (33).

[23]Commenting on this passage, Osborne notes that "since Chrysostom's work was an immediate 'best seller,' its influence on the theology and spirituality of the priesthood remained dominant for centuries" (150).

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regard to the parish somewhat resembled the bishop of the diocese" (Dalton 276).

Toward the end of the middle ages "the mass became the exclusive domain of the priest and clergy." Evidence of this development is ample:

> For the first time we find incensations, a procession with the gospel book, intricate chants which only the trained clergy could sing. The eucharistic canon was prayed totally in silence, theologically justified by allusions to the Old Testament in which the priest entered alone into the Holy of Holies.... Latin became incomprehensible to the lay people, and the liturgy gradually lost its ability to "speak" to them.... The altar, too, was at this time moved from the area of the people to the back wall of the church, where formerly the bishop's cathedra had been placed.... The pure white bread came to be used for Eucharist, and as this white bread became popular, communion was no longer given in the hand but on the tongue. Shortly after this, the consecrated cup was not given to the lay people at all.... That the priest touched the host was one of the issues stressed, particularly in the pious and popular discussions which emanated from the theological dialogues. Priestly hands and priestly words were, therefore, most sacred, and a priestly life must be closer to that of angels than to other men and women. (Osborne 189-90)

The result of these changes was, as Eamon Duffy argues in *The Stripping of the*

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Altars, "an enormously high doctrine of the priesthood" (110).[24] In fact, a case can be made that other forms of ritual, including "medieval community theatre," grew up in response to clerical eucharistic exclusivity. Clifford Flanigan, for example, advances the notion that English vernacular drama became "a kind of active and popular liturgy, which performed essential ritual functions for a lay society separated by rood screens and philosophical abstractions from ... the 'alienated liturgy' of the altar."[25] This seems especially plausible if one considers what Peter Marshall calls in *The Catholic Priesthood and the English Reformation* "the distinct theatricality adhering to the Catholic mass and the priest's role within it" (37). Simultaneous with the foregrounding of "the monopolistic role taken by the priest" at the Eucharist was the allegorical identification of the celebrant with the person of Christ:

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[24]Duffy argues that the "prestige" of the Eucharist "as the center and source of the whole symbolic world of late medieval Catholicism" had tremendous and lasting implications: "The priest had access to mysteries forbidden to others: only he might utter the words which transformed bread and wine into the flesh and blood of God incarnate, those "five wordes withouten drede/ that no mon but a prest shulde rede.' No layman or woman might even touch the sacred vessels with their bare hands. When the laity drank the draught of unconsecrated wine which they were given after communion to wash down the Host and ensure they had swallowed it, they had to cover their hands with the houseling-cloth, for the virtue of the Host and blood affected even the dead metal of the chalice" (110). Duffy's argument affirms that of Keith Thomas who asserts that "it was inevitable that the priests, set apart from the rest of the community by their celibacy and ritual consecration, should have derived an extra cachet from their position as mediators between God and man" (32). Duffy and Thomas also agree that the experiences of priest and people at worship were profoundly different. Thomas points out how "during the Mass the priest and people in fact pursued different modes of devotion," and Duffy explains how "the [priest's] liturgy and [the people's] converged only at the climactic moment when Heaven and Earth met in the fragile disc of bread [the priest] held above his head," i.e. at the elevation of the eucharistic host (118).

[25]Flanigan's unpublished argument is summarized in Gail McMurray Gibson's *The Theatre of Devotion*, 41.

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> In the mass the priest signified or betokened Christ, just as the altar signified the cross, or the empty chalice the empty tomb. Of course, the idea that an ordained priest became in some sense an *alter Christus* was central to the very theology of orders, but in the mass this was seen as being so in a special sense. As the author of the popular fifteenth-century work, *Dives and Pauper,* expressed it "as oft as the priest singeth his mass, he representeth the person of Christ that died for us all upon the tree." (Marshall 37)[26]

At the same time that Eucharistic doctrine and practice emphasized priesthood in an ever-increasing way, stressing how the ordained were different from all others in the church because of their power to confect the body and blood of Christ, another development in sacramental theology was sharpening this same focus: "By 1100 the Celtic form of the sacrament of reconciliation had for all practical purposes supplanted the Roman system [in which] the bishop had been the prime liturgical figure; in the Celtic system, it was the priest" (Osborne 192). Beginning in Ireland in the middle of the sixth century, this second system of forgiveness was developed by missionary monks who brought it to England and the continent where it caught on quickly. As Thomas N. Tentler points out in *Sin and Confession on the Eve of the Reformation*, preeminent among the

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[26]This kind of allegorical identification is also taught by Thomas Aquinas. In the *Summa* he regards the priest as the representation of Christ in every ritual gesture he makes: "The things the priest does in Mass are not ridiculous gesticulations. They are done to represent something. When [for example] the priest extends his arms after the consecration, it symbolizes the extension of Christ's arms on the cross" (*Summa Theologica* 3a 83, 5, ad. 5).

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developments within this new system was that "the priest's role in the sacrament was more carefully defined and its importance in the process of forgiveness radically enhanced."

The Decree of the Fourth Lateran Council (1215), *Omnis utriusque sexus*, is particularly important in this regard because it set in motion an educational program of massive proportions. As a result of this Decree, which H.C. Lea calls "the most important legislative act in the history of the church," clergy were required to instruct the laity in the method of making auricular confession. According to Eamon Duffy,

> [The Council] put into the hands of the parish clergy an immensely valuable pastoral and educational tool, for the priest in confession could explore not only the moral condition of his parishioners, but also their knowledge of Catholic faith and practice.... But the obligation of annual confession placed enormous demands on both confessor and penitent. The penitent needed to know how, what, and when to confess, and the priest needed to be able to distinguish between what was serious and what trivial, to impose the appropriate penances, and to apply the best remedies for his parishioners' spiritual ailments. (54)

According to the conciliar Decree, not only was annual confession now required under pain of excommunication for every Christian who had reached the age of reason, but also this confession was to be heard by the proper ecclesiastical authority. For most people, this meant confessing to their local pastor who, among other concerns, was charged with watching for heresy. All of this, again, obviously affected the amount of power associated with the priesthood. As Peter Marshall comments, "in the hearing of confessions and in the

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pronouncing or withholding of absolutions, the confessor performed a quintessentially priestly act":

> Nowhere in pre-Reformation England was the distinction between layman and priest more marked than in the theory and practice of auricular confession. The juxtaposition is striking both visually and symbolically: the priest sitting in judgment, the lay man or woman a kneeling petitioner. (5)

That priests exercised more and more power throughout the middle ages is ultimately reflected in the theories developed by the Scholastics, theories which were to shape Roman Catholic sacramental theology for centuries to come. Peter Lombard (d. 1160), who provides medieval leadership on many theological fronts, is the first thinker to stress explicitly the power belonging to those in holy orders: "If, however, one asks: what is that which is here called order, it can indeed be said to be a certain sign, that is, something sacred, by which a spiritual power and office is given to the one ordained" (*Libri IV Sententiarum* v.2: L.IV, D.XXIV, cc. xiv).

This power is subsequently defined in relationship to the eucharist by Alexander of Hales (d.1245) when he asserts that "Order is a sacrament of spiritual power for some office established in the Church for the sacrament of communion" (*Comm. In Sent.* IV, d. 24, q.a,a. I sol 2 ad 1). Most importantly in terms of lasting influence, this approach to presbyteral power is confirmed by Thomas Aquinas (d.1274). In the *Summa Theologica* he writes:

> Since the consecration conferred in the sacrament of orders is directed to the sacrament of the Eucharist, as stated above, the principal act of each

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> order is that whereby it is most nearly directed to the sacrament of the Eucharist. In this respect, too, one order ranks above another, insofar as one act is more nearly directed to that same sacrament.

Again:

> A priest has two acts: the first is the principal one, namely to consecrate the body of Christ; the second is of lesser importance, namely to prepare the people of God to receive this sacrament ... As regards the first act, the power of the priest does not depend on any higher power except divine power. (*Summa Theologica* L. III, q.38, a. 4, Respond.)

These passages from the *Summa* could easily be augmented by similar texts from other medieval theologians, but the point is obvious enough: because he presides at the Eucharist the priest is preeminent among Christians, and, as Osborne notes, "this theory of eucharistic priesthood dominated Western theology ... down to Vatican II" (207).[27] Well

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[27]Despite its influence, Osborne rightly points out that this understanding of priesthood is only a "theory": "The use of the word theory is deliberate here, although in the centuries between high scholasticism and Vatican II, many theologians would have called this 'the ordinary teaching of the Church.' From our vantage point of Vatican II, we can look back and see that it can only be a theory since the bishops at Vatican II moved deliberately beyond this eucharistic approach to the priesthood, making a broader understanding of the priest the 'ordinary magisterium of the Church' for our day.... Priesthood, in the conciliar documents of Vatican II, is based on the total and comprehensive mission of Jesus, and not exclusively on the eucharist. The priesthood is more than a sacramental priesthood; it is a priesthood which reflects the three-fold mission of Jesus: to teach, to sanctify, and to lead. Vatican II in no way implied that the scholastic approach was erroneous, only that it was too narrow" (207-8). For more on developments in the theology of orders in the middle ages, see B. Cooke, *Ministry to Word and Sacraments: History and Theology* (Philadelphia, 1977). It should also be noted that during the current pontificate there has been a resurgence of certain aspects of the pre-Vatican II understanding of holy orders. In the most important document of his pontificate on the subject of priesthood and priestly formation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*,

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into our own century, then, Catholic theologians insisted on such presbyteral preeminence. Msgr. Ronald Knox, for example, offers a telling explanation:

> What I am trying to explain to you is that the priest does here act a part, and the part of our Blessed Lord himself. Isn't that perhaps a rather irreverent idea? Why, no; because this isn't ordinary acting.... The priest doesn't pretend that somebody is there who isn't there. Jesus Christ is really there; there's no pretending about it. He's really there, not merely in the sacred Host, but also in the person of the priest. We mustn't say that the priest is Jesus Christ; that would be blasphemy and nonsense. No, but the priest has become a kind of dummy through which, here and now, Jesus Christ is consecrating the sacrament, just as He did, but in his own person, 1,900 years ago. (111)

The foregoing discussion of priesthood outlines the seemingly stable context for sacerdotal self-fashioning on the eve of the Reformation. Typical of the attitudes fostered by such a context are the remarks of John Colet in his sermon of February, 1512, to the fathers of Canterbury Convocation in which "he suggested that the dignity of priests was superior to that of kings or emperors [and] equal to that of angels." "Others," as Peter Marshall contends, "had even fewer inhibitions about claiming more than a mere parity with the status of the angels, and late medieval English preachers may regularly have reminded their congregations that no angel had ever been granted the privilege of saying

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Pope John Paul II describes the priest as "a living and transparent image of Christ the Priest" (nos. 12, 22). This notion is also echoed in *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* which points out that "the ordained minister is ... an icon of Christ the priest" (no. 1160).

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mass" (45). That "such rhetoric permeated the religious culture of late-medieval Europe" is further evinced by the fact that similar sentiments are expressed in sources as divergent as spiritual reading and stage plays. Again, Marshall notes that "pious readers of the perennially popular *Imitation of Christ*, which appeared in numerous editions in early sixteenth-century England, were reminded that not even the purity of an angel could make them worthy to touch the sacrament, unless, of course, they were a priest" (45). Moreover, audiences of the morality play, *Everyman*, would have heard its hero advised "that his only hope [for eternal life] lies in receiving the sacraments from a priest" (118):

> There is no emperour, kinge, duke, ne baron
> That of God hath commicion
> As hath the leest preest in the worlde beinge;
> For of the blessyd sacramentes pure and benigne
> He bereth the keyes, and therof hath the cure
> For mannes redempcion - it is ever sure -
> Whiche God for our soules medicine
> Gave us out of his herte with grete pain.
>
> ....
>
> For preesthode excedeth all other thinge.
> To us holy Scripture they do teche,
> And converteth man fro sinne, heven to reche.
> God hath to them more power given
> Than to ony aungell that is in heven.

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With five wordes he may consecrate

Goddes body in flesshe and blode to make,

And handeleth his Maker bitwene his hande[s].

The preest bindeth and unbindeth all bandes,

Bothe in erthe and in heven.

Thou ministres all the sacramentes seven;

Though we kist thy fete, thou were worthy!

Thou arte the surgyon that cureth sinne deedly;

No remedy we finde under God

But all onely preesthode.

Everyman, God gave preest[s] that dignite,

And setteth them in his stede amonge us to be.

Thus be they above aungelles in degree. (ll. 712-720; 730-749)[28]

Other writers did not even hesitate to compare the dignity of priests to that of the Mother of God. In *Sermones Discipuli*, a book which Marshall describes as "extremely popular with parish priests on the eve of the Reformation," the ordained is called "the maker of his Maker":

Mary had conceived with five words (*fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*) just as the priest consecrates with five words (*hoc est enim corpus meum*); Mary carried Christ in her hands and lifted Him and laid Him down, the priest raises Him after the consecration; Mary was sanctified in her womb

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[28]The text of *Everyman* cited here is found in David Bevington's *Medieval Drama.*

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> before she conceived, priests are ordained before they can consecrate.
>
> (118)

Even Thomas More (d. 1535), who is elsewhere quick to condemn clerical abuses, contributes to this kind of thinking when, in his *Life of Pico,* he insisted on the reverence due to "the quick relics, the ministers of His Church" (Marshall 119).

As Peter Marshall notes, however, just as the priesthood was assuming what appeared to be its "essential immutability," it was about to undergo "irrevocable change":

> From the latter years of Henry VIII to the accession of Mary I, ... the concepts of priesthood and ministry were violently disputed by religious theorists, and ... new understandings of the implications of the clerical office were to receive growing institutional expression. Bishops and theologians of Protestant sympathies, whose influence was contingent in Henry VIII's reign, and paramount in that of Edward VI, saw the priesthood in terms of function rather than of essence: priests were conceived as faithful pastors and, most importantly, ministers of the Word of God. To Catholic traditionalists, the pastoral element was important, but the quiddity of the priest was in his inherent capacity to mediate grace via the sacraments, in particular those of eucharist and penance. (1)

These "violent disputes," and the variety of "institutional expressions" which they inspired, need to be treated in the following chapter because they establish the condition of presbyteral possibilities in the era of Southwell and Donne. Before proceeding, however, it is also important to note how these disputes and expressions came as a surprise to most of

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those concerned. Even while "the cry for moral reform is a constant theme in Christian history," as some of More's anticlerical writings evince, it is not, as Christopher Haigh observes, "the precursor to crisis" (9). Prior to the series of political and religious events that began to unfold when Henry VIII decided he no longer wished to be married to Queen Katherine, "there were no Reformations on any visible horizon" in England (Haigh 11). According to Haigh, "late medieval parish life was not just a going concern, it was an expanding business, [and] the overall demand for Masses and, therefore, for priests to say them was huge" (29):

> So in 1530, ... the conventional religion of late medieval England was at its most luxuriant and energetic.... There is a very wide range of ... evidence to suggest that the ordinary religion of English parishes was in a healthy and vigorous state in the early sixteenth century.... The English were investing heavily -- perhaps more heavily than ever before -- in their religion. There is nothing here to indicate that we are on the eve of Reformation, or that there was any decay of conventional piety. The political Reformation in England was not preceded by a collapse of Catholic Christianity, or even by any real contraction, but by a consolidation of considerable strength. (39)

That collapse did come, and come rather quickly, in the years just before Southwell and Donne appear on the scene would certainly make for considerable anxiety. If Haigh is right in describing the experience of Reformation-era Englishmen as something akin to riding a see-saw, then it would seem that few of the riders had any preparation for the lesson in political and ecclesiastic gravity which they were about to learn. And if they

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had little preparation, they had even less say in what was initially "the King's Great Matter." What starts as an argument about the validity of a single sacramental marriage ends with the dismantling of the sacramental system itself. Along the way, the nature and purpose of ordained ministry will be radically called into question.

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2. "Masse No More Messinges": Priesthood in Reformation Polemic

That "the essential immutability" of the priesthood came to be questioned in the minds of many early modern Englishmen is perhaps nowhere more evident than in the considerable number of anti-Catholic books and pamphlets published in the middle of the sixteenth century.[29] In one such pamphlet, a bitter satire on Roman doctrine entitled *John Bon and Mast Person*, a plowman mocks the claims of a priest in regard to the Eucharist. After repeatedly referring to the Body of Christ as "copsi crusty" instead of Corpus Christi, John Bon, the plowman, argues that the consecrated host is "but a cake." The parson tries his best to correct this egregious error by reminding John of the sacred power inherent in presbyteral speech:

> And after that we consecrate very God and man
>
> And turne the breade to fleshe wyth fyue wordes we can.

This statement, along with the priest's claim that he has the authority to "tourne the wyne to bloud," sends the plowman into a rage. As C.W. Dugmore describes the scene, "with a 'masse me no more messinges' and an exhortation to the parson to leave his 'devilish masse,' ... John Bon declares he knows cheese from chalk" (119). While anti-clericalism is hardly a new phenomenon in English popular literature, this kind of direct attack on the sacramentally sanctioned powers of the priest is practically unprecedented, save among the

[29] Dugmore mentions that in 1548 alone between twenty and thirty such books were published. For the purpose of supporting the following argument, it is important to note that a good number of these were translations of Lutheran originals (117).

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Lollards.[30] Just how the condition of possibility for such an attack developed so quickly in early modern England will be discussed in the following.

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the priestly poems of Southwell and Donne in their immediate theological context, and this is "no mean and easy task" (Osborne 220). In describing the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Malcolm Mackenzie Ross relates how "the [English] firmament becomes a whirling jumble of every conceivable dogmatic stress" where "the language .. vacillates uncontrollably between [theological] ... extremes, missing none of the intervening notes of the scale" (55). It is not my intention to rehearse an obviously unwieldy religious and rhetorical repertoire, but the kinds of sacerdotal self-fashioning which these priestly poets achieved need to be set against the broad outlines of this bewildering background and the anxieties it generated.

Eamon Duffy's survey of the decline of traditional religion in England begins with the year 1530, three years before the Henrician break with Rome. He is careful to point out, however, that prior to this date, leading continental reformers had begun to undermine the Scholastic sacerdotal synthesis examined above, and that these attacks certainly reached an English audience.[31] Since I am largely concerned with how, as they

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[30]That such attacks were becoming increasingly common during the reign of Edward VI is clear in light of the fact that in 1547 the King and Parliament felt compelled to pass "a Proclamation Concerning the Irreverent Talkers of the Sacrament." The law's effect, however, seems to have been weak. As Dugmore notes, "despite the ... Proclamation, discussions of the Eucharist continued to be as frequent as they were violent" (117).

[31]Duffy, Dickens, Haigh and other historians acknowledge that some few Englishmen were receptive to the teachings of continental thinkers because they were influenced by the legacy of native reformers such as Wyclif and his Lollard followers. Dickens's observations are typical: "True, we must not overlook the native English heresy

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write themselves into ministerial roles, Southwell and Donne deal with the related issues of priestly character, the notion of Eucharistic sacrifice, and the practice of sacramental confession, I will restrict my survey of Reformation thought accordingly.

As A.G. Dickens reports in his landmark book, the religious history of Britain is best read in the light of earlier European developments:

> Without question the English Reformation belonged to that far larger breakaway which detached half of Europe from the Papacy. In essentials the early English Protestants of the 1520's and 1530's were Lutherans.... [Ultimately] it need scarcely be added that the ... wave of continental influence came from Calvin, even though his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, first published in 1536, was, for the most part, a systematic

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derived from Wycliffe, yet its permanent importance lies in the fact that, as a kindred but similar biblical faith, it helped to create popular reception areas for the newly imported Lutheranism. Left to itself, Lollardy lacked the 'modern' weapons needed to break through the status of a national church" (14). That Lollards anticipated the teachings of Luther and Calvin is obvious in the "Twelve Conclusions," the sect's 1395 manifesto, "condemn[ing] the subordination of the English church to Rome, together with transubstantiation, clerical celibacy and its untoward consequences, the consecration of physical objects, prayers for the dead, pilgrimages, images and the excessive preoccupation of the Church with the arts and crafts, ... and deny[ing] that confession to a priest is necessary for salvation" (Dickens 48). In assessing Lollard influence on the eve of the Reformation, Haigh cites Thomas More's 1533 observation that if anyone surveyed the English dioceses "except London and Lincoln he shall scant in any one of all the remnant find punished for heresy four persons in five years" (52-53). Haigh concludes, then, that Lollardy was "an amorphous and shifting phenomenon subject to forceful external pressures," and "not a big problem" (53). This same conclusion is echoed by Carl Trueman who states that the themes the English Reformers held in common with the Lollards were "common currency in the continental Reformation." "Furthermore," he asserts, "if Lollardy was an initial influence upon the shape of English reformation theology, this influence was rendered invisible by the overwhelming impact of more recent and more sophisticated theological developments" (44).

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> exposition of Luther's volcanic utterances. By that very fact, Calvinism attained a potent influence in England during the later decades of Elizabeth's reign, when it stiffened the Puritan background of the Anglican church at a time when the latter had not yet begun to assimilate the mild but seemly ritualism later associated with Archbishop Laud. Thus at no time did Tudor Protestantism lose touch with its continental progenitors. (13-14)[32]

These same insights of Dickens are confirmed in a more contemporary critical modality by Debora Shuger:

> The intellectual culture of the English Renaissance, as well as a good deal of its literature, theology, and devotion, was part of a European discursive economy whose organization differed according to the textual commodities in question: the romantic epic imported from Italy, neo-Senecan drama from France, scholarship and theology from the Protestant civilizations of Northern Europe. (*Bible* 6)

In terms of the theological products imported from Northern Europe to England, reformed understandings of ministry *per se* were hardly the hottest sellers. The bigger volume items in Shuger's religious market were the relationship between grace and good

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[32]The issue of continental influence on English Catholics, as well as Protestants, will be treated in the chapter on Southwell. As a prelude to such treatment, it should be noted that even Dickens acknowledges the influence: "Neither for that matter did English Catholicism, preserved during its Elizabethan crisis through the heroic invasion of England by the Seminary priests and Jesuits, young men trained on the continent for the spiritual reconquest of their native country."

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works; the question of justification; the place of the Word in Christian life and worship; and the authority of the Pope. As Kenan Osborne points out, however, "since a theology of Christian ministry involves in some way or another all of these basic issues, [it] could not but be affected by the way one theologized [about them]" (219).

In assessing the impact of various continental reformers on England, in general, and on the nature and purpose of ministry, in particular, it becomes clear that Luther and Calvin are easily the most influential. Even the official Roman Catholic response to Protestantism evinces that this is so in that the formulations of the Council of Trent focus primarily on the teachings of these men and their followers. While pointing out how English reformers "considerably modified" the theology of the earlier of these two thinkers, Carl Trueman asserts that while "they were not Luther and had differing concerns and emphases from him, it was nevertheless contact with Luther's work which radicalized their thinking and changed them from Catholic Humanists to Protestant Reformers." Christopher Haigh, too, warns that the English Reformation "did not follow any general continental pattern," but he urges readers to keep in mind the fact that "English protestors borrowed ideas from Luther [and] they became Protestants, consciously part of a broader Protestant cause" (12).[33] At the end of his study of religion in the Tudor period, Trueman concludes that "English Reformation theology is, in the

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[33]Haigh insists that it was political developments which brought Lutheran ideas to the fore in England. He points out that "the Catholic church in England was not corrupt and worldly as in Germany." Moreover, "Luther's ideas had only slight impact in England before Henry -- for his own, decidedly un-Lutheran reasons -- turned against the pope. And if Henry found it briefly convenient to deal with Lutheran princes and Lutheran theologians, he also found it necessary to burn Lutherans for heresy" (12).

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broadest sense, Luther's legacy" (5-6). His conclusion, then, can serve as my starting point in this attempt to situate priesthood in the midst of Reformation polemic.

Most Luther scholars agree that there is "surprisingly little" about ministry in the German reformer's writings because it is "incidental and secondary to the real controversy" (Reumann 228). What little there is, moreover, appears to be inconsistent and anything but systematized or theologically elaborated. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify several differences between the Lutheran and Roman positions on ministry. First, Luther made much of the fact that the sacrament of orders was a Roman Catholic innovation for which the New Testament offers no sanction. On this account, Luther prefers to speak about a "*ministerium ecclesiasticum*," as opposed to an ordained priesthood. Secondly, Luther's understanding of ministry is largely determined by his teachings on the nature of the Euchrist. Because he isnsisted upon the unique and sufficient efficacy of the saving death of Christ on the cross, Luther attacked the Catholic doctrine that the sacrifice of Calvary was repeated during the mass. Whatever the minister might be doing during a Lutheran worship service, he was not reenacting the death of Jesus.[34]

Concomitant with this shift was Luther's insistence on the preeminence of Scripture in Christian life and worship. Hearing the Word read and preached was, for

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[34]For a senese that most early modern Englishmen thought just the opposite up to and including the reign of Edward VI, see Dugmore 117-118. In Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests,* the shedding of blood upon the Cross "in helpe of al mannkynd" is said to be repeated in the mass: "so yet eche day in the masse he scheddet his blod in heye mede to al that this belevet" (*Festial* 170).

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Luther and his followers, the necessary prerequisite for faith; and it is faith alone that can justify or save. From this perspective, simply having a minister say the right prayers and make the correct liturgical gestures is no guarantee that God's grace is operative. For Luther, presbyteral prayers and actions are no more than "good works," and as such they are of dubious value in the economy of salvation. To return to Shuger's monetary metaphor, priestly power depreciates significantly when Luther devalues the sacramental currency, and this devaluation affects penance as much as Eucharist. Luther believed that confession was effective only insofar as it aroused faith in the penitent. Again, it is faith alone that gives grace:

> Everything, then, depends on this faith, which alone makes the sacraments accomplish that which they signify, and everything that the priest says come true. For as you believe, so it is done for you. (Hebblethwaithe 48)

The actions and intentions of the priest are of little or no import here. Even if the confessor were to grant absolution in jest, it would still be effective in one who has faith. "On the other hand," as Margaret Hebblethwaithe points out, "if the priest was serious, but the penitent could not believe himself forgiven, then he was not forgiven." Ultimately, "the ... outcome of seeing confession as no more than an aid to faith was to say that it was an entirely optional observance" (48-49). Luther has thus undermined sacerdotal status. Priests, once regarded as indispensable for their confessional faculties, are, in the reformed scheme of things, reduced to adjunct status in a pious elective.

The devaluation of priesthood in the teachings of continental reformers is not, however, to be equated with a dismissal of the very concept of specialized ministry.

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Luther, as opposed to Anabaptists and other more radical sectarians, was convinced that the call to ministry comes from God, and that the primary function of those so chosen is to preach. Of course, he understood that ministers would also baptize and preside at the Eucharist, but those functions were to surrender pride of place to the work which scripture tells us was most frequently done by the apostles.[35] Because the Acts of the Apostles states that the first Christian ministers "were always making speeches," Luther could confidently make "the essential and almost exclusive connection between the specialized ministry and preaching" (Osborne 233).

This same connection is at the heart of John Calvin's approach to ministry. In his 1557 *Commentary on the Psalms* he claims, "God drew me from obscure and lowly beginnings and conferred on me that most honorable office of herald and minister of the Gospel."[36] That Calvin was in debt to Luther in this as in so many things is acknowledged when the former pays tribute to the latter's role in launching a reformation in the church:

> We remember with amazement how deep was the abyss of ignorance and how horrible the darkness of the papacy. It was the great miracle of God that Luther and those who worked with him at the beginning in restoring the pure truth were able to emerge from it little by little. Some claim to be

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[35]That Luther's thinking was influential on later Protestants in this regard is evinced by the fact that in the single decade after 1550, John Calvin preached more than 1,700 sermons while performing only 50 baptisms. Bouwsma notes that Calvin preached "regularly and often: on the Old Testament on Wednesdays at six in the morning (seven in winter), every other week; on the New Testament on Sunday mornings; and on the Psalms on Sunday afternoons" (29).

[36]Cf. Bouwsma 10.

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> scandalized because these good personages did not see everything at once and did not finish and polish such difficult work. It is as though they were accusing us of not seeing the sun shine as fully at dawn as at midday. (Bouwsma 11).

When Calvin takes to "finishing" and "polishing" the work of his predecessor, he reiterates much that Luther had to say regarding sacramentality (Bouwsma 110). Again, the issue of offering "the sacrifice of the mass" largely determines Calvin's position on the nature and purpose of ministry. As he understands it, the problem with Roman Catholic priesthood is that it presupposes a flawed soteriology. As Osborne notes, two related issues undergird Calvin's opposition:

> [First], a theology of priesthood which compromises the sufficiency of Jesus' salvific work is a false theology and one that can only endanger the total Christian teaching. Secondly, if the priest is performing a good work (the mass) in order to merit grace, particularly the grace of forgiveness of sin, then ... the "once and for all" aspect of Jesus' salvific work is placed in jeopardy. The crux of Calvin's criticism of priestly ministry as presented by the Roman position is most in evidence here. (245-46)

Since ordination to the priesthood as practiced in the Roman Church had no clear scriptural precedent, Calvin considered it to be among those "mixed" institutions which he detested. Ordination, like sc many Roman Catholic "inventions," mixed human and divine inspiration, earthly with heavenly things. Of one mind with Luther, he believed that the doctrine of *Scriptura Sola* was intended precisely to prevent such mixture" (Bouwsma

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35). In terms of the Eucharist, Calvin was inclined to stress how its primary purpose was as a "bond of charity" that united the community of the faithful. As Bouwsma notes, "Communion, for him, was literally a function of community, by which we are joined in one body and one substance with our head" (216). Calvin was particularly attached to the Lord's Supper and was an advocate of frequent reception under both species. He was opposed to the Roman form of the ritual precisely because it offended his sense of community by emphasizing preeminence of the priest. He took pains to condemn private masses in which "one person withdraws and gulps alone and there is no sharing among the faithful." In similar fashion, he objected to the use of Latin, comparing "the almost inaudible 'muttering' of the celebrant of a mass to the spell of a sorcerer" (Bouwsma 217).

For all of his objections to Roman Catholic sacramentality and the understanding of priesthood it presumed, Calvin was adamant about the need for ministers. In part because he feared anarchy, Calvin was "inclined to favor authoritarian modes of control" (Bouwsma 219). As he understood it, human nature required some ministerial check:

> Each of us must submit to that order [*police*] which God has established in his church.... That is why he wanted ministers.... And let us not murmur because we are not all granted such a privilege, for it is his will that his body, that is his church, should be governed in such a way. (*Inst.*, IV, iii, 2)

If Calvin can be accused of his own brand of clericalism, then, it is born of practical concerns for church polity rather than of cultic prerogatives.

Finally, for Calvin, ministerial authority "is a necessary bridle for the good of the

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church."[37] Along with their duty to preach the pure Word of God, Calvin's ministers were responsible for reproving sinners, and he was open to the possibility that the forum for this would resemble auricular confession. If a person could derive comfort and faith from unburdening his soul and hearing the words of absolution, then the option should be made available to him:

> It not seldom happens that he who hears general promises which are intended for the whole congregation of the faithful, nevertheless remains somewhat in doubt, and is still disquieted in mind, as if his own remission were not yet obtained. Should this individual lay open the secret wound of his soul to his pastor, and hear these words of the gospel specially addressed to him, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee" (Mt. 9:2), his mind will feel secure, and escape from the trepidation with which it was previously agitated. (*Inst.* III, iv, 14)

In this way, Calvin preserved some vestige of the confessional function of Roman priests, but his penitential ritual celebrates redemption won by Christ at a unique moment in the past, rather than the operation of grace as a present reality mediated by a presbyter.

Calvin condemned the Catholic theory and practice of sacramental penance in no uncertain terms, referring to it as "a narcotic of hypocrisy," but he wanted to insure the integrity of his community by affording people the opportunity to admit their sins to a

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[37]Cf. Bouwsma 219.

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pastor.[38] At the same time, he reminded ministers that they did not belong to a separate caste: "No one can ever be a good minister of God's Word unless he is first of all a student.... And even as a teacher, a minister should not sit down and command others but should walk among them as companions" (Bouwsma 227). Furthermore, pastors are to be subject to the scrutiny of their congregations. "All who serve in the ministry," Calvin insisted, "belong to *us*, so that we are free not to embrace their teaching until they show it is from Christ." In practical terms, this meant that ministers should be elected by the church.[39] In this way, "the authority of pastors is especially to be contained within boundaries that must not be transgressed." "Christ," he claims, "has given nothing more to pastors than that they should be servants and completely abstain from dominion" (Comms. II Cor. 1:24, 4:5). Calvin's thinking in this matter is very pragmatic: "[God] uses the

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[38]Cf. Hebblethwaite 49. Calvin's condemnation of sacramental confession is quite strong: "But all these things cannot cover the wound [of sin], and are less an alleviation of the evil than poisons disguised with honey in order not to cause offense at the first taste because of their harshness but to penetrate deep within before they are felt. Therefore that dread voice always presses and resounds in the ear, 'Confess all your sins.' And this terror cannot be allayed except by a sure consolation. Here let my readers consider how it is possible to reckon up all the acts of an entire year and to gather up what sins they have committed each day. For experience convinces each one that, when we have at evening to examine the transgressions of only a single day, the memory is confused; so great is the variety and multitude of them that press upon us" (*Inst.* III, iv, 17). In his *Antidote to the Sixth Session of the Council of Trent,* he adds, "I do not say at present how cruel an executioner to torture and excruciate consciences is that law of [Pope] Innocent [of the necessity of confession] which they anew promulgate; how many it has driven headlong to despair; what a narcotic of hypocrisy it has been to lull others asleep; how many monstrous iniquities have sprung from it!"

[39]This is not to say that Calvin was a thoroughgoing democrat when it comes to church polity. He stipulates that other pastors should preside over the election process, "so that fickleness, evil intent, and disorder do not occur." Furthermore, those elected were to be "ordained" by other pastors in a ritual laying on of hands. (Cf. Osborne 243).

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ministry of men to declare openly his will to us by mouth, as a sort of delegated work, not by transferring to them his right and honor, but only that through their mouths he may do his own work -- just as a workman uses a tool to do his work" (*Inst.* IV, iii, 1).

As a result of the influence of the Lutheran and Calvinist positions on ministry, both priests and the people whom they served are likely to have experienced a certain amount of anxiety. This is obviously an historical judgment, and in making it I am relying on the work of scholars who admit to being "in the awkward position of basing essentially quantitative conclusions on patently qualitative evidence":

> [Anxiety] is notably present, at various levels of generality, in recent scholarship dealing with the transition from those centuries that were clearly "medieval" to those almost as clearly not. Historians of this important segment of the European past seem, in fact, to be discovering symptoms of a peculiar anxiety in many places.... Garin [,for example,] speaks of the ... Renaissance as "the beginning of an age of subjective torment," whatever it may have represented positively. And Lynn White, Jr., broadly presenting the three or four centuries after 1300 as a time of "abnormal anxiety," has offered us a general interpretation of the period in these terms. We seem to be reaching a point at which the general implications of this scholarship ... must be confronted more deliberately.[40]

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[40]This awkwardness is explained by Bouwsma when he admits that 'the study of historical anxiety ... requires some special theoretical resources. But the empirical side of such investigation also presents unusual difficulties. Some degree of anxiety seems latent in the human condition, and various expressions of it can doubtless be discovered in every time and place. And at the same time it seems unlikely that, outside of the laboratory,

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In moving toward just such a deliberate "confrontation" with the specific anxieties accruing to the process of sacerdotal self-fashioning, I want to read the reformers' attacks on the theory and practice of Roman Catholic priesthood as an instance when "conceptual boundaries" become blurry. These boundaries, which were well established in the popular imagination and the Scholastic theological synthesis, had long enabled people to impose stable meaning on their experience. Largely as a result of the ways in which it was reenforced during mass and confession, the Roman definition of priesthood was among the most important of "a common set of distinctions" which pre-Reformation people applied "to all areas of human concern, notably such polarities as inside and outside, high and low." The distinction between priest and people was a construct that promoted a certain kind of clarity. It empowered those who subscribed to it "to distinguish, to classify, ... and so to create an intelligible and coherent cosmos, apparently rooted in the eternal principles of nature itself, out of the undifferentiated chaos of raw experience." As a result, "the phenomenal world could thus be reduced to a kind of orderly map; men could feel at home in it because they could distinguish one area from another by clear conceptual boundaries which were reflected in the structure of life as well as thought" (Bouwsma, "Anxiety" 228). What Bouwsma notes of pre-Reformation conceptual boundaries in general acquires special resonance when read with ordained ministry in mind:

Bounding and distinguishing were fundamental to the scholastic method,

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anxiety can ever be submitted to precise measurement. Accordingly, that one age or social group was more or less anxious than another can hardly be supported by the kind of hard comparative data that may be adduced for more objective phenomena.... Nevertheless, these problems have not deterred able historians from speaking about anxiety in the past" (216-17).

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> with its definitions, categories, and species. The sacred was clearly differentiated from the profane, *sacerdotium* from *imperium*.... Social identity depended on the boundaries between communities and classes, within which the individual was contained and at home. God was himself bounded by his intelligence, which guaranteed not only the immutability and intelligibility of the whole structure but also its ontological status. Boundaries were thus invested with numinous awe. ("Anxiety" 229)

When, as a result of Lutheran and Calvinist influences, the boundaries between priests and people were understood to be more permeable than previously thought possible, a clerical "culture" once "able to give an ontological foundation to the phenomena of human experience could no longer do so." Such a culture seemed to many to have "lost touch with reality and become irrelevant; its definitions and boundaries could no longer supply meaning to life, [and] the result was a crisis in confidence" ("Anxiety" 231). In questioning the traditional understanding of the Eucharist and in relativizing the importance of sacramental confession, thereby undermining the nature and purpose of Roman Catholic priesthood, religious reformers were contributing to an anxiety-producing dynamic characteristic of early modern culture:

> The new culture of modern Europe was constructed on a quite different pattern of assumptions. It began with the recognition that culture is not an absolute but the creation of men, and therefore a variable and conventional product of changing conditions and shifting human needs.... Since his culture was simply the product of his own creative impulses, it no longer

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> seemed possible for man to make every dimension of reality permanently intelligible or to comprehend the whole under the same broad categories.

Ultimately, "the new culture, precisely because of it own relativism, has never been more than relatively successful in the management of anxiety" (Bouwsma, "Anxiety" 238-39).

If a kind of unmanageable religious anxiety was characteristic of early modern Europeans in general, then a convincing case can be made that it was even more true of Englishmen. Recent scholarship has documented the slow and tortuous course of the Reformation under the Tudors and the Stuarts. As a result, it is now clear that "a combination of government coercion and individual conversion drove traditional Catholicism from the churches, and replaced it with a Calvinistic Protestantism" (Haigh 3). Haigh notes that for many people the Reformation brought changes that were "merely external, from passive observance of Catholic ritual to passive hearing of sermons and psalm-singing." For others, however, and perhaps for very few as much as for Southwell and Donne, "the adjustment from the familiar to the novel must have been worrying." In the case of these priests, "there was real spiritual reorientation: from a Catholic mental universe of supportive saints and saving sacraments to a Protestant one of justifying faith" (3). What served to exacerbate this situation was the fact that in England, as opposed to on the continent, religious change was "piecemeal" in the sense that "it took twenty years to get from the first real attack on church jurisdiction in 1532 to the first Protestant church service in 1552; and then it was almost undone by Queen Mary." As Haigh points out, "only in 1559 did an English regime opt for a full Reformation, and still there were

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theological, liturgical, and legal loose ends to tie up" (13).[41] Much of what follows will be concerned with how the poems of Southwell and Donne serve as sites for that very effort.

What Haigh aptly describes as "loose ends" has a great deal to do with the fact that it is difficult now, as it must have been at the time, to determine how much of what passed for religious reformation in England was a result of political pragmatism. If it is indeed the case that "political reformations made Protestantism possible" during the reigns of Henry VIII and his immediate successors, then keeping score of doctrinal decisions is exceedingly difficult. Henry, for example, inherited a kingdom in which the state of the Catholic church had been steadily improving for over one-hundred years. As Haigh points out, "heretics were, like critics of church courts, refusers of tithes, and complainers against the clergy, far from numerous. There were high levels of compliance with the church's discipline and conformity to its beliefs" (55). Henry himself had been awarded the title "Defender of the Faith" for his 1521 response to Luther's innovations in sacramental

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[41]Haigh proceeds to describe how the religious changes of sixteenth-century England were "far too complex to be bound together as 'the Reformation.'" Instead, "England had discontinuous Reformations and parallel Reformations, ... blundering Reformations, which most did not understand, which few wanted, and which no one knew had come to stay." If we want to understand these Reformations, then Haigh would have us "break them up" and "deconstruct" them. This is best done, he suggests, by examining the particular acts of particular men; and this examination should be conducted with patience for them and their situation. "They lived in confused and dangerous times," he tells us, "when ideas and power structures were unstable." We need to remember that "participants did not know that they were in 'the Reformation'," and that "they did not elect for or against [it] in one great do-or-die decision; rather, they made a number of lesser choices in particular contexts" (14). My aim is to examine how such choices are made and reenforced in the context of poetry.

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theology.[42] When he subsequently engaged in disputes with the English hierarchy, it was usually to challenge the competence and jurisdiction of clerical courts; and even when he ran into episcopal opposition to his plans regarding the disposal of his first wife, the crisis was more political than doctrinal (Haigh 89).

As a result of international realpolitik, Henry ultimately had to rely upon "spurious historical arguments" produced by his "divorce think-tank" in order to make his case for annulment (102). At this point, however, he had hardly embarked upon a Reformation. Even after the "Submission Crisis" of 1532, which ended with Henry seizing control of canon law, little changed in terms of doctrine; and this remained the case, except in matters touching upon the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Rome, after parliament passed the Acts of Suppression and Supremacy in 1534. Five years later, and again as a result of international political considerations, Henry began to "sanction concessions to Lutheran doctrine" (123). In doing so, he was establishing a pattern that was followed by monarchs throughout most of what remained of the Tudor era. Theological speculation was secondary to political strategy, and this approach was heeded not only by the Henry and his successors, but also by the vast majority of the people. Haigh argues convincingly for the existence of "an easy-going majority" who throughout the period of Reformations and Counter-Reformations remained flexible in matters of faith. Even as late as the accession of James I, this majority might best be described as "de-catholicized but un-

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[42]Henry's book, *Assertio Septum Sacramentorum*, was likely a collaborative effort. Wolsey suggested the idea to the King who promptly farmed it out to university theologians. Thomas More is widely believed to have put the drafts in order, while the King added the finishing touches. Concerning the priesthood, the King is vehement about the dignity of the sacerdotal order and insists that it is absolutely necessary (cf. Haigh 57).

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protestantized," because "what they were *not* is a good deal clearer than what they were" (290).

The well-honed survival skills characteristic of Haigh's "easy-going majority" enabled them to get by as kings and queens embraced religious positions of various degrees of reform for equally various reasons. Toward the end of his life, Henry rejected the Lutherans with whom he had once been willing to negotiate. For example, when it had seemed politically advantageous to do so, Henry was willing to use the sacrament of Holy Orders as a bargaining chip in negotiations with continental powers. In the last years of his reign, however, he supported the Six Articles with their defense of clerical celibacy and the need for auricular confession. As Haigh would have it, "Henry dies a Catholic, but a bad Catholic" (167).

The level of religious anxiety is likely to have increased at the start of Edward VI's reign when Protestant sympathizers gained the upper hand. Among their first victories was a 1549 decision to allow priests to marry, and upon the heels of this momentous change came the authorization of a new Ordinal, or ritual prescription, for the ordination of ministers.[43] This alteration was greeted enthusiastically by those who had been deriding the sacrament of the altar as "Jack of the Box" and mocking priests as "godmakers" (Haigh 173). While there was certainly resistance to these changes, which in some cases went so far as to become violent, the use of the 1549 Book of Common Prayer became

[43]As John Donne was ordained according to this ritual, it will be described at length in Chapter 4. As Haigh reports, "in January, 1550, a committee was appointed to devise an English ordination service; it approved a draft prepared by Cranmer, which simplified the medieval rite along lines suggested by Martin Bucer, and the Ordinal was published in March" (176).

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more or less uniform; and while it retained the consecration, "there was no suggestion of sacrifice, and elevation [of the consecrated species] was forbidden" (174). During Edward's reign, altars were replaced by communion tables, and when the new Prayer Book was published in 1552, its Eucharistic doctrine showed the growing influence of Calvinism.

It is important to note that one of the effects of the Edwardine reforms was a sharp decline in the number of men seeking ordination. Earlier in the century, as Haigh reports, men were offering themselves for ordination "in unprecedented numbers" (42). That this trend continued up through the reign of Edward's father is evinced by the fact that Thomas More complained in *Utopia* that England had too many priests. As "religious change ... proceeded by spasmodic fits, uncertain starts, and threats of reversal, ... recruitment to the priesthood ... almost ceased." In fact, "by the end of Edward's reign, there were signs of a clerical manpower shortage" (182). It seems that doubts raised about sacerdotal status resulted in diminished numbers. Men were understandably reluctant to commit themselves to a career that promised such an uncertain future. What had been a growth industry in the 1520's was on the verge of collapse twenty years later.

When Mary Tudor came to the throne in 1553, England looked to all the world like a Protestant country. At least this was the case on the surface of things. Just beneath the surface, however, there is evidence that most Englishmen were clinging to various aspects of their Catholic past:

> The Edwardian regime had abolished chantries and masses, and pulled down images and altars; its people conformed to the new services, and with

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> much muttering, they mainly did as they were told. But this was an external obedience only, for official Protestantism was still a minority faith. (202)

I use the phrase "just beneath the surface" quite deliberately. As Eamon Duffy reports, throughout the reign of Edward VI and, later, that of Elizabeth, parishioners in many parts of England "hid the physical remnants of Catholicism" in churchyards in order to protect them from reformers who sought their destruction. These remnants were buried just beneath the surface so that they could be retrieved easily if and when the political climate might allow it. Altar-stones, holy water stoups, sacring bells, and pyxes were concelaed by those who were anxious about the validity of Protestant forms of worship. Much of their anxiety, according to Duffy, was the result of "Catholic instincts" which proved to be more tenacious than the reformers had first imagined. Even toward the end of Elizabeth's reign, "Protestant authorities found themselves with an uphill task":

> Although the evidence of surviving churchwardens' accounts makes clear the essential conformity of most parishes, it was a reluctant and partial conformity. The removal of roods and drawing down of altars which fill the pages of virtually every set of accounts ... were not in most cases the result of a landslide of popular fervor, but of weary obedience to unpopular measures. Once more the ingrained sense of obligation to the Crown asserted itself, and the Tudor parishioners' respect for "the lawes of the realme ... and the procedynggs of the heyghe powers." But like Sir William Paynter, vicar of Bradwell, whose words these are, the majority of parishioners were firmly attached to "the observatyons and ryghtes of the

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> catholyke churche," and many hoped for, and most thought possible, a return to the old ways. (570-71)

Obviously, these hopes were realized, albeit for a short time, during the reign of Mary Tudor, whose accession was greeted with enthusiasm in many quarters. According to Haigh, "the *real* hallmark of the Marian church (shown in court act books, visitation presentments, and churchwardens' accounts, rather than in the pages of John Foxe), was local enthusiasm, an enthusiasm which produced large sums of money, raised with great speed, in bucolic ways, to devote to popular projects" (214). Interestingly enough, the numbers of clerical recruits increased significantly: "Under Edward VI ordinations had almost ceased; in Mary's reign they boomed" (215). In fact, in 1550, Mary's last year on the throne, recruitment to the priesthood was better than it had been for thirty years. The connection between clerical power and popularity seems obvious. The office is attractive when it is understood to be effective.[44] Cardinal Pole, who returned to England in 1554,

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[44]I do not mean to imply that seeking ordination for the sake of power is the best of motives. Even Haigh admits that the large number of recruits had to do with "enhanced career opportunities," and this is hardly praiseworthy. That the promise of power is proposed as a reason for seeking ordination is a constant in efforts at clerical recruitment. In fact, it will have much to do with Donne's motives for becoming a priest. Perhaps the most famous literary instance of seeking ordination for the sake of power is found in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. When the Jesuit recruiter tries to convince Stephen Dedalus to join the order he offers him all sorts of prerogatives: "To receive that call, Stephen, ... is the greatest honor that Almighty God can bestow upon a man. No king, no emperor on this earth has the power of the priest of God. No angel or archangel in heaven, no saint, not even the Blessed Virgin herself has the power of a priest of God: the power of the keys, the power to bind and loose from sin, the power of exorcism, the power to cast out from the creatures of God the evil spirits that have power over them, the power, the authority, to make the great God of Heaven come down upon the altar and take the form of bread and wine. What an awful power, Stephen!" The language is obviously similar to that used by medieval preachers and playwrights. The fact that the recruiter's pitch builds to a eucharistic crescendo is part of a centuries-old pattern.

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built on this increase in clerical numbers as he implemented the decrees of the Council of Trent.[45]

The years of Catholic revival came to an end at Mary's death, though this was not likely to have been immediately evident at the time. Elizabeth seems to have been aware of what Duffy calls "the Catholic instincts" of a good many of her subjects. If they were affected by a certain amount of religiously-generated anxiety, then it is possible that their new Queen was as well. In an essay on Elizabeth's "Troublesome Coronation," Richard McCoy points out that while all of Henry VIII's heirs "faced grave liturgical problems" at their accessions, Anne Boleyn's daughter "faced far more challenging ecclesiastical and liturgical difficulties than either of her predecessors" (217). McCoy investigates Elizabeth's "somewhat confusing conduct during the coronation mass," and turns up evidence that she was especially concerned with whether the presider elevated the host after the consecration. While she demanded that a Catholic bishop anoint her to insure the validity of her coronation, she maintained an "enigmatic" stance toward the manner of eucharistic celebration. McCoy notes that "to confirmed Protestants, the elevation of the host was the essence of popish idolatry," and rather than witness such a display and alienate her Protestant subjects, the new Queen is reported to have "retorned unto her closet hearing the Consecration of the Mass" (220). And if hiding in the closet during her coronation liturgy is not evidence enough that Elizabeth suffered from a certain amount of

[45]That Pole thought he could rely on local clergy is one of his reasons for rejecting the offer of Ignatius Loyola to send Jesuits to England. More on this will follow in Chapter 3, but it is important to note that Pole believed he could implement Tridentine reforms without the "energetic evangelism" which the Jesuits represented (Haigh 224).

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anxiety, McCoy also documents how the Queen deliberately circulated "an unusually cryptic and fragmentary" account of her behavior in the chapel. Elizabeth seems to have hoped that such confusion would serve the cause of religious compromise and thereby lessen anxiety, but her plan apparently backfired. As McCoy observes,

> Elizabeth's coronation was indeed a compromise of sorts, but her intentions were hardly clear, and her subjects' conflicting consciences were, in many cases, more alarmed than reassured by the service's ambiguities. Catholics were distressed by her omission of the elevation and reports of her irreverence toward the clergy and their ceremonies.... At the same time, the Genevan exiles were so shocked by her adherence to traditional Latin rites that some resolved to stay away "until directed by Calvin himself to return." The coronation was a typical Elizabethan compromise with something to confuse and offend everyone. (222)

Once Elizabeth settled on the course which the Reformation would take during her reign, she attempted to deal with anxieties by appropriating "the oberservatyons and rightes of the catholyke church" for her own ends. In place of traditional modes of devotion, Elizabethan authorities attempted to substitute "the celebration of Gloriana." Sacred times and places were adapted in ways that made them fit for advancing nationalistic strategies. November 17, the feast of St. Hugh of Lincoln, for example, became attached to the celebration of the Queen's Accession Day, and it was but one of many "old practices [that] took on new, and in some ways opposite meaning" (Duffy 590). As Duffy shows, there is solid evidence to support the thesis that the Protestant program

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of desacralization and abrogation produced a considerable amount of anxiety.

Elizabeth went out of her way to make liturgical compromises throughout most of her reign, but these seem not to have gone over well with her parish clergy, most of whom had been recruited as Catholic priests. Following the pattern established during the reigns of Henry and Edward, the number of clerical recruits declined again. That there was a shortage of clergy is evinced by the fact that Elizabethan bishops were forced to allow pluralism. There were not enough priests to cover all the parishes in England, so the hierarchy was forced to make necessary accommodations despite the clarity of Protestant thought on this issue (Haigh 249). A fair number of the senior Roman Catholic clergy steadfastly refused to accept the Queen's reforms. Many of these fled abroad, and others became chaplains to Roman Catholic nobles and their families. Their people followed suit, and as Haigh reports, recusants in York refused to attend Church of England services because these had "neither priest, nor altar, nor sacrifice" (260). In response to this kind of Catholic resistance, Elizabeth's government passed "a Draconian statute" in 1585 which made it treason for a priest ordained abroad to enter the country. Moreover, it was treason for any person to give such a priest aid or shelter (Haigh 263). Despite the best efforts of seminary priests and the few Jesuits who accompanied them after 1580, English Catholicism was fast becoming "a country-house religion, the faith of the gentry and their dependants" (266). Just as Robert Southwell was about to enter England illegally in 1586, Roman Catholics were on the verge of dwindling to numerical insignificance. The level of anxiety among remaining recusants and their priests was running high.

Many hoped that the accession of James I in 1603 would finally lead to a

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resolution of the religious tensions which had clearly colored the reigns of his predecessor right from the start. As Joel Hurstfield notes in an essay on the motives of the men involved in the Gunpowder Plot, James came to the throne "promising all things to all men" (102). He aimed to smooth things over in matters of religion, and his ambitions on this score extended well beyond England. At the start of his reign he fancied himself "a second Constantine" in that he wanted to call an ecumenical council which would restore unity to Christendom:

> Of all the visions that floated in James's imagination, the most Olympian was that of uniting Catholics and Protestants in one universal Church. The ideal of Christian unity was far from dead in his time, and his proposals had some reason in them, at least in theory. He saw the political divisions among Protestants ... threatening the crowns of conservative monarchs like himself. He saw the divisions between the Jesuits and the more moderate type of Catholic such as Clement VIII. Did not he and Clement have more in common with each other than either of them had with the extremists of their faiths? Was it not possible that the Pope, renouncing temporal sovereignty and the political methods of the Jesuits, and the King, renouncing the Puritans, might meet upon some middle ground of Christian compromise? (Willson 219).

As hopeful as the first Stuart monarch might have been, he seems to have underestimated the effects resulting from over fifty years of religious stress and strain. The very "extremists," Puritans and Jesuits, whom he wanted to eliminate had grown in

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influence during Elizabeth's reign. It is likely that one result of the compounded anxieties documented above was that more and more people took refuge in "immoderate" approaches to religion. As D.H. Willson observes, with Jesuits in the lead English Catholics "increased in numbers and boldness," and the same was true for their Protestant contemporaries (222). Despite Elizabeth's efforts, she had "failed to cripple the evangelical instincts" of a growing number of her subjects. As a result, at the end of her reign, "offenses of Protestant enthusiasm were more common [than Catholic conservatism]" (Haigh 278). While James sought to work out a "golden mean" in all things religious, marginalized groups assumed an increasingly vocal role in the religious discourse of the time, and much of this discourse focused on the nature and purpose of ordained ministers.

Earlier, I noted that Malcolm MacKenzie Ross has attempted to articulate how religious "relativism" and its attendant anxiety affected Reformation-era English poetry. In his estimation, the revolution in religious dogma described here is nothing less than a "revolution in [the English] way of knowing things." In what follows, I will employ some of his insights to show how no poets were more affected by this revolution than Southwell and Donne. If Ross is right in claiming that most English authors of the period were influenced by a "disruption" in the sacramental firmament, then it follows that Southwell and Donne, whose very ontological status was at stake, would be particularly conscious of the consequences both for their poetry and their personal identity.

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3. "The Saddest Bird a Season Finds to Sing": Southwell's Poems of Sacramental Confidence and Self-Doubt

In large part because he was a member of the Society of Jesus for many years before being ordained, writing about Robert Southwell writing as a priest is a complicated business.[46] These complications need to be embraced and explored, however, if we are to understand the energies that motivate his poetry. The work he did, the studies he pursued, the manner in which he prayed, and the company he kept during the long course of Jesuit formation contributed significantly to the way in which he fashioned himself in subsequent years. Furthermore, Jesuit foundational documents supply what Debora Shuger might call "the primary language for [his] model of Christian selfhood" (*Bible* 9). For Jesuits on the eve of the seventeenth century, no less than for those on the eve of the twenty-first, there are seemingly irresolvable tensions around the issue of primary identity: are these men Jesuits first and foremost who happen to be Catholic priests, or are they priests who happen to belong to a religious order?[47] It is tempting, on the one hand, to let Southwell

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[46]Southwell entered the Society on October 17, 1578. In the second year of his noviceship he was transferred to the Roman College, soon to become the Pontifical Gregorian University, to begin the study of philosophy. He pronounced his first vows on October 18, 1580, and completed his "Public Defense" in philosophy a year later. From the Roman College he moved to the English College where he would serve as a prefect and tutor to his fellow countrymen while completing his own training in theology. The exact date of his ordination is difficult to determine, but Parsons refers to him as "Father Southwell" in a letter of 1585. Interestingly enough, the occasion is never mentioned in his spiritual notes (Devlin 66).

[47]That this tension is alive and well in the present century can be discovered in the documents of recent Jesuit General Congregations and the Vatican responses to them. In articulating a mission, Jesuits are constantly asserting the particular characteristics of their "way of proceeding." In so far as most Jesuits are ordained, they exercise their priesthood accordingly, and not at all in the same manner as the secular clergy. Recent popes, on the

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and his contemporaries off the hook in resolving these tensions because they belong to the first generation of those members of the Society of Jesus who experienced them.[48] Moreover, Southwell hardly had the leisure to pursue this kind of speculative thinking, faced as he was with the urgent and dangerous task of shoring up the faith of Roman Catholics in England.[49] On the other hand, perhaps because he was present at, or at least

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other hand, keep reminding Jesuits that theirs is a "sacerdotal institute," and that they share in the church's one presbyteral office. The roots of this tension are as old as the Society itself. As O'Malley observes, "most Jesuits [of the first generation] were ... already ordained priests or destined for ordination. What is surprising about this fundamental reality is how seldom it is singled out for comment (157). A particularly telling example of this kind of omission occurred when Jeronimo Nadal, whom Ignatius sent to every Jesuit house in Europe for the purpose of promulgating the foundational documents, began an exhortation with an apology for his narrative: "I must mention, by the way, that yesterday I forgot to tell you that Father Ignatius was ordained a priest" (O'Malley 158).

[48]Life in the Society was recognized from the start as a revolutionary way of exercising ministry within the church. As a result, it was misunderstood by those outside as well as those within. Ignatius and those to whom he entrusted the dissemination of his ideas emphasized how members of the Society were to imitate the apostles. Jeronimo Nadal, for instance, instructed young Jesuits that "our vocation is similar to the vocation and training of the Apostles: first, we come to know the Society, and then we follow; we are instructed; we receive our commission to be sent [on ministry]; we are sent; we exercise our ministry; we are prepared to die for Christ in fulfilling those ministries" As O'Malley reports, Nadal "continually proclaimed, 'we are not monks'." He needed to remind Jesuits themselves that, while members of monastic orders flee the company of other human beings, "the essence of the Jesuit was to *seek* their company in order to help them" (68). Nothing was to stand in the way, including the familiar trappings of medieval religious life. Jesuits were not to chant the Office in choir, nor were they to wear monastic garb or live in monasteries or convents. According to the Founder, subsequent generations of Jesuits were to understand that "the world is our house" (O'Malley 68).

[49]The enormity of the task assigned to Southwell and the other Jesuits sent to England, at least in its psychological proportions, can perhaps be best understood in light of Edmund Campion's so-called *Brag*. Campion preceded Southwell to England and to death by several years. Just before his arrest and execution he penned the following lines "in less than half an hour at the corner of a table on 18 July, 1580." As Basset opines in *The English Jesuits: From Campion to Martindale*, "no book on the English Jesuits ...

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near, the beginning of the Society, it might be fair to hold Southwell especially accountable on this score. There is a presumption that those who live in closest proximity to the founder of a religious order are in a privileged position in terms of understanding its particular charism.[50]

This chapter will build on that presumption and explore how Southwell, who entered the Jesuits less than forty years after Ignatius Loyola and his companions received papal approbation, understood himself as a poetry-writing-English-Jesuit-priest. My contention is that all of these hyphens leave ample room for various kinds of energy to circulate and surface in his life and that they make for gaps, traces or fissures in his verse, the study of which will yield insight into what Stephen Greenblatt might call "the half-hidden cultural transactions" through which seventeenth-century works are "empowered" (Greenblatt, *Negotiations* 4-5). Southwell's English verse, as well as his major prose, all

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would be complete without a copy of the *Brag*" (454). Likewise, no dissertation touching on the subject would be complete without at least an excerpt from the same: "Many innocent hands are lifted up to heaven for you daily by those English students, whose posterity shall never die, which beyond the seas gathering virtue and sufficient knowledge for the purpose, are determined never to give you over but either to win you heaven or die upon your pikes. And touching our Society be it known to you that we have made a league -- all the Jesuits of the world, whose succession and multitude must overreach all the practices of England -- cheerfully to carry the cross you shall lay upon us and never to despair of your recovery, while we have a man left to enjoy your Tyburn, or to be racked with your torments or consumed with your prisons. The expense is reckoned, the enterprise is begun, it is of God, it cannot be withstood. So the faith is planted, so it must be restored."

[50]This presumption is reflected in the Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Renewal of Religious Life which states, "the up-to-date renewal of religious life comprises ... a constant return to the primitive inspiration of the institutes.... Therefore, the spirit and aims of each founder should be faithfully accepted and retained, as indeed should each institute's sound traditions, for all of these constitute the patrimony of an institute" (*Perfectae Caritatis* #2).

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of which was written after his ordination, can best be understood as an "achievement out of conflict" and as part of an effort to resolve the same. Here, I mean to explore how his poetry serves as a site for working out his complicated identity as a Counter-Reformation priest in the context of the Society of Jesus, as well as his role in the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in early modern England.

Like Christopher Haigh, I am fascinated by attempts on the part of English Renaissance poets to tie up "loose ends" in the midst of controversy. Robert Southwell may well have grasped at more of these "ends" than most others. The extent to which this is true, I think, accounts for the passionate and highly charged nature of his work. To date, Southwell scholarship, meager though it is, has focused on one or another among the various constituent parts of his identity. In almost every case, critics have tended toward "unified interpretive readings" of his work, settling for one perspective and making it normative (Greenblatt, *Negotiations* 4). They have committed Bouwsma's sin of "reductionism," forgoing all the complications inherent in a man for whose loyalties there was so much competition, in favor of a variety of purportedly totalizing readings (Bouwsma, *Calvin* 230). My intention is to foreground that competition, and, thereby, deliberately complicate the heretofore neat world of Southwell scholarship.[51]

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[51]As will become obvious, Louis Martz's *The Poetry of Meditation* is "the starting point in modern criticism of Southwell's poetry," and in reaction to his argument for the predominant, if not exclusive, influence on Southwell's verse of the meditative practices of Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, more recent studies by Rosemund Tuve, Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, and Richard Strier have moved in other directions. Tuve, for example, "challenges Martz's argument concerning the influence of Catholic meditative traditions on the seventeenth-century English devotional poets," arguing instead that "if we attempt to view sacred parody as a distinctive feature of the Counter-Reformation, 'we shall have to bear with the awkward results of the fact that the tradition and aesthetic are attached at

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To date, most critics have stressed Southwell's "Jesuitness," but in ways that do some injustice both to the poet and to the religious order to which he belonged, not to mention the context in which he wrote. What I will show is that Southwell's motivation for writing has, as Martz suggests, a great deal to do with his understanding of the mission and ministry of the Society of Jesus; and while the formative value of the *Spiritual Exercises* can never be underestimated in this regard, it is hardly the only influence in his life and work. Issues to which Loyola's *Exercises* attend hardly or not at all surface and circulate prominently in Southwell's poetry and prose. He foregrounds literary, liturgical, and political matters that never occurred to his religious patron. To read him, then, as most critics have done, as a poet of the *Exercises* alone, is to ignore much that animates his priestly poetry.

Martz begins his analysis of Southwell's verse by making a great deal of what the missionary priest discovered upon his return to England in 1586. From the age of fifteen, Southwell had been studying and teaching at Jesuit schools on the Continent, first at Douai and later at Paris and Rome. Now, according to Martz, Southwell sailed home at twenty-five, "seeking to reform English poetry by bringing to it certain arts he had found flourishing on the Continent: the practice of religious meditation, and the conversion of

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the farther end to Coverdale, ... Calvin, and Luther'" (King 225). Lewalski, as might be expected, gives Southwell rather short shrift as she "relegates [him] to a minor role in English literary history." To do otherwise would only undermine her efforts to show that "English seventeenth-century devotional poetry developed under the impulse of native Protestant influences rather than Catholic continental models" (King 225). Richard Strier, too, discounts the influence of Southwell by reading him almost entirely as a creature of the Counter-Reformation. He understands Southwell to be paving the way for Crashaw and others who write poetry for the sake of "cultivating ecstasy" ("Changing the Object" 37).

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the methods of profane poetry to the service of God" (183). That Southwell began such a "campaign, by precept and example, to translate the devices of profane poetry into the service of religious devotion," is indisputable. The problem with Martz's analysis, however, is that he does not attend to Southwell's larger purpose, a purpose which serves as the context for understanding the Jesuit missionary's concern for poetry in the first place.[52]

Southwell had been missioned to England by Everard Mercurian, the superior general of the Society of Jesus, with specific instructions, none of which touched directly upon remedying "the poor estate of English religious poetry" (Martz 180).[53] Instead, after

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[52]Another context for understanding Southwell's missionary efforts is the history of Jesuits in England prior to the arrival of his immediate predecessors. In 1542, for instance, two of Ignatius's original companions, Salmeron and Broet, "spent a brief and fruitless few months in Ireland as papal legates in the wake of Henry VIII's schism." It is also reported that "Ignatius was eager to have some Jesuits accompany Philip II when in 1554 he went to England espoused to Mary Tudor" (O'Malley 274). When the first Marian exiles encountered Jesuits on the continent, "the new Order was then at the crest of the wave." According to Basset, "twenty-five years after its foundation it boasted 3,500 members, divided into eighteen provinces and administering one hundred and thirty colleges, seminaries, and schools." Englishmen, he argues, were attracted to the Society "because it seemed modern; the Jesuits had shed many old-time customs" (14-15). All of this, he infers, was especially appealing to exiles who had come from English universities.

[53]Southwell was missioned along with Henry Garnet, who was eventually executed in 1606 for alleged conspiracy in the Gunpowder Plot. The two men worked closely together during their years in England, with Garnet serving as Southwell's religious superior. More on their working relationship will follow. Their friendship seems to have been remarkable in light of all the tensions surrounding their mission. As Philip Caraman observes, "probably never again in the story of the Counter-Reformation in England were there two men who, working together, had such an intimate mutual understanding and became so necessary for each other's best efforts" (22). Telling in this regard is the letter which Garnet wrote upon the occasion of Southwell's execution to the Jesuit General, Claudio Aquaviva, who had succeeded Fr. Mercurian in the intervening years: "Whether I should be sorry now or glad I do not know. My sorrow is that I have lost my most dear and loved companion; my gladness that the man I have cherished so much has risen to the

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considerable resistance, Fr. Mercurian agreed to send men "to confirm Catholics in their faith, to absolve the lapsed, [and] not to battle with the heretics."[54] Bernard Basset describes how the Jesuit general, "groping in the dark and not too certain of conditions in England," missioned his men with "a list of simple and prudent rules ... in their pockets":

> Their commission, as Mercurian set it out, must be wholly spiritual.... The missionaries were urged to avoid all controversy and politics. They were not to mention politics in their letters and must never, save in private and on urgent occasions, join in conversations about the English Queen.... 'They must so behave that all men must see that the only gain they covet is that of souls.' (40-41)

This "coveting" of souls is Southwell's motivation for returning home. Concern for

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throne of God, where he will be given the recompense earned by his labors; peace in return for his cares, and the immense happiness of his God in exchange for his unspeakable tortures" (Caraman, *Garnet* 196).

[54]Mercurian's reluctance was at least two-fold. As Basset reports, "part of the General's hesitancy about the proposed mission to England was due to his knowledge that Jesuits were over committed in other parts of the world ... [since] in 1579 Jesuits had been dispatched to India, Japan, the West Indies, Poland, and Syria" (30). The General was also concerned about committing his men to so dangerous an operation. He was so wary of things English that the Pope had to command him to have Jesuits assume control of the English College in Rome, which had been founded for the express purpose of training missionary priests who would return and reconvert their homeland. Once control of the College was forced upon Mercurian, the inevitability of missioning Jesuits to accompany their students became clear. "It was pointed out to the General," Basset explains, "that the Fathers could hardly train the English seminarians for so dangerous a mission if they were unwilling to share the risks" (33). Though he eventually acquiesced to the request of influential Englishmen including Cardinal Allen, Fr. Mercurian proved prescient in at least two respects. First, he foresaw "that the English government would denounce the Jesuits as political agents and that this would damage their priestly work." Secondly, "he could not believe that so many priests, secular and regular, without a bishop, could live long in harmony" (34).

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souls is, as he well knew, the primary purpose of the Society of Jesus, which had been founded only forty-six years earlier. Everything else, including the *Spiritual Exercises*, ordination to the priesthood, and writing poetry, is secondary. These are all means to a very specific Jesuit end, and they ought to be understood as such.[55] According to its motto, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, the Society understands itself as founded for the greater glory of God, but the number of times that this catchphrase appears in foundational documents pales in comparison to the frequency of the expression "to help souls" (O'Malley 18).[56]

Since its inception, the end or purpose of the Society of Jesus has been greatly misunderstood. In his Introduction to *The First Jesuits*, John O'Malley cites the English historian, John Addington Symonds, who, while writing a little over a century ago, included "Jesuitry" among the "seven Spanish devils" that entered Italy after the year

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[55]That the *Exercises* are to be understood as a means to conversion is clearly stated by O'Malley at the start of his book: "That document encapsulated the essence of Ignatius's own spiritual turn-around and presented it in a form meant to guide others to analogous changes of vision and motivation. Ignatius used the *Exercises* as the primary means of motivating his first disciples and prescribed it as an experience for all who later entered the Society.... There is no understanding the Jesuits without reference to that book" (4).

[56]O'Malley's ground breaking history of the Jesuits is important precisely because it examines and employs documents other than the *Exercises*. Included along with Ignatius' famous retreat manual are the *Formula of the Institute*, which is to the Jesuits what the Rule is to other religious orders; the *Constitutions*, which, according to O'Malley, "articulated the broad principles according to which the Society was to achieve its goals and reduced the vague generalities of the *Formula* to concrete structures and procedures" (7); Ignatius' *Autobiography*, a narrated story of his life up to 1538 which best models the Jesuit "way of proceeding"; and, lastly, the Founder's voluminous correspondence which "contains theory and ideals ... interpret[ed] against the background of everyday reality" (9).

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1530. According to this eminent Victorian, the mission of the Jesuits lies in "sham learning, shameless lying, and [the] casuistical economy of sins" (1). And while it is certainly possible to document the genesis and growth of this image of Ignatius and his followers in the imaginations of Englishmen, it is more profitable, here, to follow O'Malley in his efforts "to understand the early Jesuits as they understood themselves" (3).[57] In order to do so, it is necessary at the start to acknowledge and attack the most common of misconceptions about Jesuit ministry in the age of Robert Southwell. As O'Malley plainly puts it, "although the Society of Jesus would have had a much different history, it would have come into being even if the Reformation had not happened, and it cannot be defined primarily in relationship to it." Moreover, "in many parts of the world, the direct impact of the Reformation on the Jesuits ranged from minimal to practically non-existent" (17).

Even in places such as England, where this impact was inevitable, Jesuits "tended to understand the Reformation as primarily a pastoral problem": "They saw its fundamental causes and cures as related not so much to doctrinal issues as to the spiritual condition of the persons concerned, and they helped perpetuate this interpretation, which correlated with their own understanding of what was most important in life" (O'Malley

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[57]For a recent treatment of the role of Jesuits in the English imagination see Gary Wills' *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth*. Wills, a former Jesuit, describes the intrigue surrounding the Gunpowder Plot of 1605 in order to argue that most modern productions of "the Scottish play" fail precisely because they do not understand this historical background. After rehearsing the tragedy's bedeviled stage history, he attempts to perform a kind of scholarly exorcism by reclaiming and representing the context in which the play was written. Wills wants to show how Shakespeare appropriates a significant amount of Jacobean anti-Jesuit sentiment in his play.

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16).[58] This insight is absolutely critical for an understanding of Southwell's priestly poetry. He writes poetry as a pastor, and he is confident that his literary efforts are a means of helping souls. This confidence was grounded in his understanding, both as a priest and as a poet, of "what was most important in life." In "The Author to his Loving Cousin," a dedicatory epistle introducing his work, Southwell wants to show "how well verse and vertue sute together"; and he can do so only on account of a prior conviction that his verse and his vocation, his poetry and his priesthood, are no less congenial.[59] As McDonald and Brown conclude in their Introduction to Southwell's collected poems, "the prose and poetry he wrote in English had been undertaken in order to further his work as priest, [and] ... the part played by the poems in his missionary endeavor must be constantly kept in mind" (vx).

Southwell's missionary methods, which brought him to poetry, are informed most significantly by his understanding of the proper work of a Jesuit priest. Poetry was, for him, one among the several ministries which he would exercise during the six years that he

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[58]Because so many have understood the Jesuits in terms of the Reformation for so long, there is warrant for belaboring this point. Ignatius himself reiterated it, often instructing his men to avoid "controversies" and "doubtful matters" in their preaching. He urged Jesuits in Prague, for example, "not to enter into polemics with the Protestants in the pulpit" (O'Malley 96). Promoting sound spirituality was, he insisted, "the bulwark against the errors of the times" (221). The attitudes of the first Jesuits to enter Germany is instructive in this regard. After careful observation they came to the conclusion that among the first and principal causes of "the calamity that afflicted Germany ... were the depraved morals and vices of ecclesiastics." The solution was obvious enough: "If the bad lives of Christians were the cause of the Reformation, good lives must be the cure" (277).

[59]All citations from Southwell's works, unless otherwise specified, are taken from *The Poems of Robert Southwell, S.J.* Ed. James H. McDonald and Nancy Pollard Brown. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967.

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labored in England.[60] As such, his verse must be read in light of what he learned and lived in the course of his religious formation. That formation, spiritual and intellectual, serves to ground his future work. In order to do the work of "helping souls," Southwell had learned from his formators that it was his task to promote conversion by means of "consolation." Among the hallmarks of Jesuit ministry, promoting consolation is preeminent; and it is defined by Ignatius himself. Southwell's poetry aims to promote this very specific end. He wants his works to stir motions in the souls of his readers, to enable them to order their loves aright, to move them to tears, and, most of all, to bring them comfort. This is hardly art for art's sake. It is, rather, poetry put at the service of pious utilitarianism. Moreover, even as he writes, Southwell subscribes to what might be called the Jesuit "way of proceeding," a "way" that is influenced, but not determined, by the *Exercises* themselves. Southwell, like the Founder of the Society before him, is an inveterate borrower and adapter of pre-existing forms and institutions.[61] In Loyola's case, this is true in terms of

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[60]Contrary to what earlier biographers surmised about Southwell's career, McDonald and Brown use the poet's letters to his Superior in Rome to show how he enjoyed "a most active pastoral and administrative career" (xxvii). Southwell did not spend all his time holed up in the homes of the Catholic aristocracy. On the contrary, he frequently visited prisons, provided shelter for priests who were newly arrived in London, and set up his secret printing press. Finally, in the year before his arrest, Garnet sent him on a tour of England during which he met with large numbers of Recusants. It was in the midst of all this activity that he wrote his English prose and poetry, and "his achievement as a writer was already making his influence widespread among Catholic families of great distinction" (xxix).

[61]The *Exercises* themselves, while representing the process of Ignatius's own conversion and purposeful change of life, borrow from and adapt a number of sources. According to O'Malley, these include Ludolph of Saxony's *Vita Jesu Christi*, the *Meditationes* of Pseudo-Bonaventure, Jean Gerson's *Monotessaron*, and Abbot Cisneros' *Ejercitatorio de la vida espiritual*, which lent its very name to Ignatius's project. O'Malley concludes that "the very commonplace nature of the ideas in the *Exercises* has

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activities as diverse as founding colleges and hearing confessions. Ignatius envisioned that Jesuits would often find themselves in "new, strange, and difficult situations," so that in this regard the circumstances surrounding Southwell's mission are hardly surprising.[62] Given this foresight, Loyola enshrined as one of the principles of Jesuit ministry "that it accommodate to circumstances and to the particular needs and situations of the person to whom the Jesuit ministered" (O'Malley 81). In fact, the instructions provided at the start of the *Spiritual Exercises* themselves reflect the centrality of this principle:

> The Spiritual Exercises must be adapted to the condition of the one who is to engage in them, that is to his age, education, and talent. Thus exercises that he could not easily bear, or from which he would derive no profit, should not be given to one with little natural ability or of little spiritual strength. (#18)

If Ignatius was so willing to adapt this most fundamental of all Jesuit practices, then he would hardly hesitate in other instances. According to O'Malley, Ignatius so frequently quoted the Spanish proverb that advised "going in their door in order to come out ours,"

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rendered frustrating the search for their sources, ... [and] what made the *Exercises* special was not particular themes or their mode of articulation. It was, rather, the coordination of the parts into an integral and novel totality" (46).

[62]Far from surprising, in fact, these circumstances would have seemed ideal to early Jesuits, including Fr. Nadal who upheld the virtue of mobility: "The principal and most characteristic dwelling for Jesuits is not the professed houses, but in journeyings, ... I declare that the characteristic and most perfect houses of the Society are the journeys of the professed, by which they diligently seek to gain for Christ the sheep that are perishing." Nadal's argument is treated at length by O'Malley in "To Travel to Any Part of the World: Jeronimo Nadal and the Jesuit Vocation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 16/2 (1984) 7. This translation is taken from O'Malley's article.

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that it became "the cardinal rule of Jesuit ministry" (112).

When Southwell takes up the task of adapting secular poetry for sacred ends, he is doing exactly as the Jesuits' Founder would have wished. Obviously, the fact that Ignatius and Southwell could see the ministerial potential that lay behind various secular "doors" rests on a theological underpinning. In this, Jesuits prove themselves to be heirs of the Thomistic tradition which assumes "the basic compatibility between nature and grace" and "between reason and revelation." Such an underpinning "coincided with the Jesuit conviction that in their pastoral activities they should not only rely upon God's grace, but also use all the human means at their disposal" (249). Poetry, for Southwell, is one such human means, and is therefore to be embraced, adapted, and exploited. That this view of nature and grace is Southwell's own is confirmed in the poem "To the Reader." After asserting that all subsequent lines are meant to bring "mirth" or consolation to "tyred spirits," Southwell reminds his readers of how grace perfects rather than abolishes nature: "It is the sweetest note that man can sing,/ When grace in vertues key tunes natures string" (ll. 17-18). Likewise, in "A Vale of Tears," Southwell makes a case for the gracious potential inherent in nature. As Philip Caraman observes, "the poem expresses the mysteriousness of nature veiling a spiritual reality" (*Friendship* 58).[63] The reader is reminded that God's handiwork can mediate the activity of grace in the soul and lead sinners to repentance: "Thinke that the verie stones thy sinnes bewray,/And now accuse

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[63]Caraman also points out the "high lyrical quality" of "A Vale of Tears," noting how its rhythm and music combine in a harmony rather austere but no less rich than in Grays's famous "Elegy," anticipating its romanticism by almost two hundred years" (58).

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thee with their sad replies" (66-67). What is true of God's handiwork is also true of man's: if rock formations can reveal sins, then a poet's songs can spur remorse:

> Let teares to tunes, and pains to plaints be prest,
>
> And let this be the burdon of thy song,
>
> Come deepe remorse, possesse my sinfull brest:
>
> Delights adue, I harbourd you too long. (73-76)[64]

Finally, nowhere is Southwell's view on this issue stated with more clarity and conviction than in his 1589 *Epistle to His Father*. He writes in order to urge his father to rejoin the Roman church, and he admits that his motives for doing so have as much to do with natural ties as with the operations of supernatural grace or his obligations as a priest: "Nature by Grace is not abolished, but perfected; not murdered but manured; neither are her impressions quite razed or annulled, but suited to the colors of faith and virtue" (*Triumphs* 38). Because of his understanding of the relationship between grace and nature, Southwell can approach the adaptation of contemporary poetry with absolute confidence. He never seems to have doubted whether versifying is proper on the part of a priest.

This confidence was confirmed by Southwell's personal experience as well as by Scholastic theology. His most significant encounter with an institution lending itself to Jesuit embrace, adaptation, and use occurred during the years he spent in various Jesuit

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[64]A similar view of the relationship between grace and nature is found in "The prodigal childs soule wracke," where Southwell uses the image of a stormy sea to describe the effects of sin. The sinner is a ship "enwrapped in the waves of woe,/ And tossed with a toilsome tide" (6-7). Grace works on nature such that it serves a salvific purpose. The sinner finally realizes how nature and grace cooperate when he exclaims, "Thus heaven and hell, thus sea and land,/ Thus stormes and tempests did conspire,/ With just revenge of scourging hand,/ To witness Gods deserved ire" (21-24).

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colleges. Both before and after he entered the Jesuits, Southwell was a student and a teacher at schools administered by members of the Society. When Jesuits got into the education business, a step that Ignatius and his first companions never anticipated when the order was founded, "they stepped outside ministry and piety as those realities had been traditionally understood and into a world of culture that in its humanistic component was to some extent a self-conscious break with them" (90). At the end of his study of the Society, O'Malley looks back over four-hundred and fifty years of Jesuit history and concludes that, next to the *Exercises*, the schools were "the most important institutional factor that ... shaped the distinctive character of the Society of Jesus" (372).[65] Running schools required Jesuits to engage surrounding secular culture, and this engagement "was not occasional or incidental, but systemic." While their religious mission remained basic to them, as a result of the schools, they also began to see themselves as having a "cultural mission" (242). This "cultural mission" had no less significant an impact on Southwell and his poetry. If schools "inserted [Jesuits] into secular culture ... to a degree unknown to earlier orders," then a case can be made that his experience of these same schools inserted Southwell into the world of secular poetry.

It was as a student at Douai, Paris, and Rome that Southwell came to see the ministerial potential inherent in the forms and institutions of secular poetry. Once in

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[65]In assessing the impact of schools on the Jesuits, O'Malley notes that "the most important change the schools wrought within the Society ... was the new kind and degree of its members' engagement with culture beyond the traditional clerical subjects of philosophy and theology.... Thus began an engagement with secular culture, modest enough at first, that became a hallmark of the order and an integral part of its self-definition" (242-42).

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England, the conditions of the established church, his co-religionists, and his brother Jesuits would call upon him to realize that potential for the sake of helping souls. Southwell would do with English poetry what other Jesuits were doing with schools: he would "accept the basic premises shared by [his] contemporaries" and then "imbue" pre-existing forms with features and purposes peculiarly his own.[66] O'Malley's assessment of Jesuit efforts in education is much like my own assessment of Southwell's efforts at verse:

> As was often true of them in other endeavors, the Jesuits created relatively few of the components of their educational program, but they put those parts together in a way and on a scale that had never been done before. It was this combination, not any single feature, that distinguished the educational program offered in Jesuit schools from what was offered elsewhere. (225)

Pierre Janelle, the author of one of the few book-length studies of Southwell's works, understands the sixteenth-century Jesuit schools as part of the larger Counter-Reformation project. In general, Jesuits and other reform-minded Catholics came to accept the humanist dictum that "literary knowledge and moral improvement walk hand in

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[66]The most obvious example of this kind of adaptation is Southwell's line-by line parody of Sir Edward Dyer's "A Fancy." Whereas Dyer's poem is a complaint by a spurned lover, Southwell takes the pre-existing form and turns it to a treatment of how grace endures even in a sinner, causing him to have a troubled conscience: "I cannot blot out of my heart,/ That grace wrought in his name" (ll. 107-08). The lengthy meditation on his sins brings the speaker to remorse: "My exercise remorse,/And doleful sinners layes,/ My booke remembrance of my crimes,/ and faults of former dayes" (ll. 137-140). Both authors admit to using "the faining Poets stile,/ To figure forth [their] careful plight," but while Dyer literally turns in on himself by including his name as a pun on "dire," Southwell's poem could be spoken by any remorseful sinner who has turned to God.

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hand and *pari passu*" (*Counter-Reformation* 140). In defining "the dominant thought of the literary theorists of the Catholic Reformation," Janelle describes Jacobus Pontanus (1542-1626), a Jesuit poet, as "inveighing against those who wrote things removed from virtue" (168). That Southwell stands in this same tradition is evinced in the dedicatory epistle cited earlier. He begins by attacking poets who "abuse their talent" in "making the follies and fayninges of love the customary subject of their base endeavors." As a result, they have "discredited" the poetic faculty to the point where "a Poet, a Lover, and a Liar are by many reckoned but three wordes of one signification" (1).[67] Janelle wants to insist that this Jesuit approach to literature comes out of the Council of Trent. My contention is that he puts the Conciliar cart before the Jesuit horse. He is certainly right that "a Counter-Reformation poetic" results from the fact that the Fathers of the Council "brought educational questions to the fore," but he underestimates the influence of the Jesuits themselves on the Council in this regard.

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[67]That this phrase bears a resemblance to Theseus's lines in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet/ Are of imagination all compact" (V, 1, 7-8), provides an opportunity to note that various critics have tried to establish some connection between Southwell and Shakespeare. Christopher Devlin, for example, suggests that the priest had the playwright in mind when he inscribed a manuscript of his poems, "To my worthy good cousin, Master W.S." Devlin admits that he must construct "a staircase of probabilities" in making his case, and he ultimately argues that the evidence suggests not that "Southwell *did* know Shakespeare, but that he *could have* known him." After pointing out similarities between the former's "Peter's Plaint" and the latter's "Rape of Lucrese," Devlin claims "with some probability" that "Robert Southwell's last service to English letters ... was to rouse Shakespeare to a loftier conception of the divine spark within him." Whatever the merits of this specific claim, I am more inclined to agree with Devlin when he concludes more generally that "the object of these surmises is not to build a theory, but only to suggest that Southwell's literary apostolate need not be imagined within too narrow limits. He knew the streets of London thoroughly, and the seamier side of London was not closed to his ministrations" (257-73).

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By Janelle's own admission, it was a Jesuit, Claude Le Jay, who suggested the founding of schools and seminaries to the assembled bishops. As a result, when these were established, the hierarchy was inclined to entrust them into the Society's hands.[68] Furthermore, the bishops ruled that "the Jesuit colleges already extant should be considered as complying with its decrees..." (147). Their understanding of "compliance" is somewhat proleptic. It was rather the case that their decrees complied with the Society's educational strategy. Long before the Council met, Ignatius was convinced of the merits of Petrarchan humanism which held that "a relationship existed between 'good literature' and virtue" (O'Malley 208). When Jesuits eventually backed into the education business, this "faith in the formative powers of good literature promulgated by the humanist movement found a powerful echo in the Society" (209). This was especially true in regard to the Jesuits' essentially conservative mission to reform the nobility. They were convinced that appropriate texts could entice their well-born students to behave properly, and they "fully appropriated the humanists' persuasion that culture and moral responsibility were inseparably connected" (221). When Southwell writes poems for his recusant audience, he had this very connection in mind.[69]

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[68]As was already mentioned in regard to the English College in Rome, the Society was reluctant to assume responsibility for the new Tridentine schools because, fundamentally, "the Jesuits believed that their own colleges were already 'true and excellent seminaries'" (O'Malley 237).

[69] Southwell is hardly the only early Jesuit to take what he learned in the Society's schools and apply it to missiology. Whatever the cultural and intellectual tools at hand, they were to be put at the service of the ministry of conversion through consolation. Nadal articulates this strategy quite explicitly in an exhortation delivered in 1561: "The Society wants men who are accomplished in every possible discipline that helps it in its purpose. Can you become a good logician? Then become one! A good theologian? Then become

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Martz is fundamentally correct is asserting that Southwell was discouraged by what he discovered upon his return to England, but his initial reaction had less to do with poetry than with the conditions of the Jesuit mission, the Catholic community, and the Church of England. Verse was hardly the first priority for this missionary priest, and the same can be said even about the *Spiritual Exercises*. These two ministerial tools became interrelated concerns for Southwell only after he realized that they could be of some use to him in the pursuit of his primary purpose.[70] Only then would he consider integrating the pre-existing poetic and meditative parts together into some new pastoral whole. In his own words, he came to see that part of his priestly mission was to "weave a new webbe in their own loome" ("The Author to his loving Cousin"). He consciously decided to adapt

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one! The same for being a good humanist, and for all the other disciplines that can serve our Institute ... and do not be satisfied with doing it half-way!" (O'Malley 61). As a result, Jesuits in Brazil set Christian beliefs to native tunes within a few months of their arrival, while on the other side of the globe, in Japan, Francis Xavier, while catechizing, "used verse, song, [and] dialogue ... as occasion seemed to suggest" (119). Closer to home, Jesuits became associated with the stage. In France in 1558, Jesuits were defending their dramatic productions "by affirming that their spiritual impact was the equivalent of a good sermon." At the same time in Italy, Jesuits were so closely identified with the stage that they were commonly known as "the comedy priests" (224). Again, in writing poetry, Southwell is confidently conforming to the Jesuit rule rather than standing as an exception to it.

[70]That Southwell mined the *Exercises* as a source for his mature poetry, and that the Ignatian method of meditation is mirrored in the structure of his verse, seems indisputable. For example, Martz does a masterful job of reading "New prince, new pompe," "Sins Heavie load," and "Christs sleeping friends" in light of the *Exercises* and discovering in them the classic Ignatian pattern of composition of place followed by analysis, followed by colloquy. As Martz himself notes, "poetry and meditation are by no means synonymous; and yet there is, I believe, a middle ground of the creative mind in which the two arts meet to form a poetry of meditation ... In Southwell's poetry the steps toward that meeting of the arts are so deliberately taken that we can almost mark them on a chart..." (21-2).

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secular forms of poetry as a way of consoling his anxious audience, Jesuit and lay, and he understood that this ministry of consolation was incumbent upon him as a Jesuit priest.

As a member of the Society of Jesus arriving in his native country in 1586, Southwell would have found a great deal to be anxious about and very little reason to regard Campion's aforementioned *Brag* as anything but "absurd." The stage for much of what he found had been set as early as 1570, when Pope Pius V excommunicated Elizabeth I by issuing the bull *Regnans in Excelsis.* The effects of that pronouncement were considerable on Catholics in general and on Jesuits in particular. The Pope made his case against the Queen in no uncertain terms:

> Out of the plentitude of our apostolic power we declare the aforesaid Elizabeth to be heretic and an abetter of heretics, and we declare her, together with her supporters ... to have incurred the sentence of excommunication and to be cut off from the unity of the Body of Christ.[71]

Even if the bull was not widely circulated in England, it did, as Thomas Clancy suggests, cause the introduction of new penal legislation aimed at Catholics and their priests, lead to the formulation of "the Bloody Question," and give encouragement to foreign coalitions against the Queen. Southwell will ultimately find himself in the awkward position of negotiating all of this. When Parliament met in 1571, it passed laws forbidding reconciliation with the church of Rome or any other recognition of papal power. In fact, attempts to seek absolution from a papal representative were made a capital offense.

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[71]Thomas Clancy treats this document and its effects in "English Catholics and the Papal Deposing Power 1570-1640," *Recusant History* 6 (1961-62)114-40.

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English Catholics were in a very precarious position. Rome was ruling out any possibility of even the slightest degree of conformity with the practices of the Church of England, and Elizabeth's government was quick to question their loyalty in the face of a probable foreign invasion. Southwell will eventually sail home to help his co-religionists face their predicament.

While Ignatius himself had ardently wished to see Jesuits at work in England during the early years of the reign of Mary Tudor, Cardinal Pole saw to it that no invitation was offered to the fledgling religious order.[72] Oddly enough, news about the Society seemed to spread throughout the country despite the fact that there were no Jesuits on the scene. In 1561, for example, Jesuit officials in Rome were concerned with rumors that English preachers of a Protestant stripe were warning their congregations to prepare for "a Jesuit Invasion."[73] The only basis in fact for such warnings was that Englishmen in exile were joining the Society in considerable numbers.[74] According to

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[72]Pole's reluctance seems to have been a result of the fact that Jesuits were understood to be a Spanish phenomenon and the English were already suspicious about the amount of Spanish influence on their Catholic Queen. The connection between the Society and Spain already established in the minds of most Englishmen only grew when during Southwell's years in England Parsons and Allen set up several seminaries for the training of their countrymen in Spain.

[73]See Mercurian's letter to Lainez written from Cologne on 16 April 1561 in *Epp. Lainez*, V, 482. Mercurian was somewhat flattered by the news, exclaiming, "May the name of the Lord always be a terror to heretics!"

[74]Similar anxieties were expressed in Scotland as well. When a Scottish Jesuit, John Hay, returned to his homeland for reasons of health he wrote back to Fr. Mercurian that "the word Jesuit was in everybody's mouth, and nothing else was heard at table, among the higher classes, in taverns, in the market, or in sermons delivered in church." See Hay to Mercurian, Paris 9 November 1579, in William Forbes-Leith, S.J. ed. *Narratives of Scottish Catholics under Mary Stuart and James VI* (Edinburgh 1885) 141-

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Thomas Clancy, no fewer than 140 English and Welsh men entered the Society between 1555 and 1585 ("First Generation" 138). Contrary to rumors circulating in England, however, these recruits were sent to work all over Europe. Some were missioned as far away as India and Japan, and they were hardly preparing to take their homeland by storm while teaching school in Poland and Lithuania or rendering scripture into the languages of the Subcontinent.

It was not until the mid-1570's that William Allen began to lobby for a Jesuit mission to England, and as noted above, he met with resistance from the superior general, Everard Mercurian.[75] Despite Allen's argument that Catholicism was still strong in England and that the faithful, especially at the two universities and the Inns of Court, could use the kind of encouragement which only Jesuits could offer, Mercurian refused to pledge his already over committed men to so dangerous a mission. Typical of Allen's pleas is a letter in which he tries to embarrass the general with the charge that the Jesuits are

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[75]Allen (1532-94) was educated at Oriel College and left Oxford in 1561 in order to found seminaries for the training of Roman Catholic missionaries for England. Along with his polemical writings, Allen was also involved in the translation of the Douai-Rheims bible. He was made a Cardinal on the eve of the Armada. Mercurian's resistance seems somewhat typical in light of the following description offered by Thomas Clancy in *An Introduction to Jesuit Life*: "[Mercurian] enjoyed several distinctions: the oldest man elected [general], the first man who had entered the Society as a priest to be elected, and the first non-Spaniard. Mercurian is famous for his promulgation of the *Summary of the Constitutions* and various Rules, his decree on spiritual authors 'not suitable for ours,' and for his work on the *Ratio Studiorum*. He was a consolidator and rather cautious" (120). As general, Mercurian was caught in a tug-of-war between Spanish Jesuits who wanted to make the Society more monastic in its spirituality and discipline and others, including Pope Gregory XIII, who saw the Society's potential for political involvement. Mercurian held the line against these tendencies, both of which he understood to be in contradiction with the Jesuits' "way of proceeding."

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slighting England:

> Allen in all the responsibilities of his life, son and servant to you and yours, and sincere admirer in Christ, asks, or rather the nation and our native land asks, and suppliantly requests some part of the charity and concern which you bestow upon all nations, Christian and barbarous. Father, do not repel us as we ask for justice. And you who go about collecting sheep for the flock of Christ in the far-off Indies, do not be disdainful of seeking with us the lost British lamb. (Knox, *Letters of Allen* 68-69)

Ultimately, Allen seems to have outsmarted the general by maneuvering Jesuits into assuming responsibility for the English College in Rome. The College grew out of what began in 1362 as a hospice for English pilgrims. After Henry VIII's difficulties with the Pope, it became a center for Catholic exiles and, finally, in 1577, a seminary dedicated to the training of diocesan priests. In its first years, the College was plagued by rivalries between Welsh and English students and faculty, and Jesuits were put in charge of the place in order to resolve these nationalistic tensions.[76] In some respects, Mercurian's acquiescence in this matter proved a fateful step. Once his men were committed to staffing the College, it was merely a matter of time before they would accompany their students

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[76]Eventually, Jesuits would cause some tensions of their own. During Southwell's tenure at the College, diocesan priests began to claim that the best and brightest among their ranks were being lured into the Society. Southwell was aware of this phenomenon and seems to have approved of it. In letter to Aquaviva he reports on the situation of seminarians who wish to join the Jesuits: "I am aware, and bitterly aware, that things have come to such a point that students cannot be publicly admitted to the Society without danger of scandal; but all I ask is that some way be found of affording them relief; for if we do nothing to assuage their mental anguish, we shall be responsible for their breakdown in health" (Devlin 75-76).

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home to England. As members of the College faculty, Jesuits were charged with administering an oath to their students whereby the latter declared their willingness to embark for England whenever their superiors saw fit. Soon enough, the administrators of the oath were anxious to swear it themselves.[77]

Allen also knew the Society well enough to appeal to the general's dedication to the Society's "way of proceeding." He was careful to ground his appeals for men in the language of Jesuit foundational documents. His letters to Mercurian evince his familiarity with the very passages in the *Constitutions* where Ignatius stipulates that the choice of missions should be based on location, access to elites, obligations to localities that have produced vocations, and places "where the enemy of Christ has sown cockle," a reference to the spread of heresies.[78] It was Allen's good fortune that one of Mercurian's canonical advisors, Claudio Aquaviva, prevailed upon the general to commit men to the mission. Given Allen's astute appeals to Jesuit ideals and the enthusiastic support of Aquaviva, Mercurian finally named Robert Parsons superior of the newly constituted English mission. Allen's project received even more Jesuit support when Mercurian was succeeded by Aquaviva, when the latter was elected general in 1581. Aquaviva, who had once volunteered to go to England himself, would not hesitate to send some of his best

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[77]The College was legally founded by a papal bull, *Quoniam Divinae Bonitati*, which stipulated how students were "to be instructed in the Catholic faith in which they were born, with the aim primarily of assuring their own salvation, but also that once instructed in the knowledge of theology they might return to England to enlighten others who had fallen away from the truth." For more on the foundation and focus of the College see Williams, *Venerable English College*.

[78]See the *Constitutions* ## 603-32.

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and brightest English recruits back home. These men would join Parsons, Edmund Campion, and a Jesuit brother, Ralph Emerson, who had been originally missioned by the reluctant Mercurian.

Campion is undoubtedly Southwell's most famous predecessor, as well as fellow author, and he enjoyed considerable notoriety during his own lifetime. He was an Oxford student and a protégé of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, when he fled England in 1571 to join the Society in Austria. After completing the course of Jesuit formation, he taught in Prague for several years before being assigned to the English mission. Immediately before his departure he was instructed by the Pope himself as to the scope and purpose of his new work, and the rules set out by Gregory XIII, which Campion was to promulgate, made for a situation in which Catholics were forced to walk a very fine line between obeying Elizabeth in civil matters until such time as a foreign invasion might unseat her. At best, Catholic loyalty to the Queen seemed temporary and conditional, and this would prove more than enough to make Elizabeth anxious. As for the priests themselves, both the Pope and the superior general admonished them against any direct political involvement. True to the charism of the order, however, they were free to adapt ritual practices in any ways they deemed appropriate and to employ the teachings of the Council of Trent insofar as these were a help to souls. In one matter, in particular, they were free to disregard the teachings of the Council: they were permitted to publish Catholic books anonymously. As will become clear, this exception to Tridentine legislation enabled both Campion and

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Southwell to disseminate numerous pamphlets and other works.[79]

In order to understand the zeal of Campion and the other members of the mission, it is necessary to appreciate the climate at the English College, a climate fostered by Pope Gregory XIII, successor to Pius V.[80] On one occasion when he visited the College in order to present crucifixes to the students, the Pope attached particular indulgences and graces to his gifts. Two of them are noteworthy:

> 2. For each time prayer is made before any one of [these crucifixes] for the prosperity of Holy Mother Church, and the exaltation of the Holy Catholic faith, and the preservation and liberation of Mary, Queen of Scotland, and the reduction of the realms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the extirpation of heretics, other 50 days, and on feasts, 100 days indulgences.
>
> 3. For taking part in any warfare against the foes of our holy faith, seven years and seven quarantines of indulgence, and in case of death therein, for such as have at least confessed and communicated at the beginning of the

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[79]That Garnet and Southwell successfully established a press on the outskirts of London in the spring of 1587 is certain. There is, however, considerable debate about its exact location. See Caraman, *Garnet* 42-44 and Devlin 138-48. Nancy Pollard Brown argues that the press was established with the help of the Countess of Arundel in one of her own houses. Her generosity to Southwell is well documented and Brown's argument is convincing. See "Paperchase: The Dissemination of Catholic Texts in Elizabethan England," in *English Manuscript Studies 1100-1700*, eds. Peter Beal and Jeremy Griffiths (Oxford, 1989) 123.

[80]Gregory XIII's relationship with the Society is discussed by Elisabeth G. Gleason in "Who was the First Counter-Reformation Pope?" *CHR* 81 (1995) 173-84. She notes that of all the orders the Jesuits were his favorite and he was willing to support them with generous gifts so long as they would carry out his diplomatic initiatives. Given his reticence about Jesuit involvement in politics, Fr. Mercurian was often at odds with the Pope.

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> said conflict, and are in a state of contrition for their sins, and invoke the most holy name of Jesus with their mouths or with their hearts, a plenary indulgence and remission of all their sins.[81]

The spirit of the first set of indulgences will be recognizable to American Catholics raised in the 1950's who were taught to pray for the conversion of Russia. The second set clearly contributed to a crusading mentality that can at least partially account for the truculent tone of Edmund Campion's *Brag*.

Campion's writings, which were representative of the attitudes of many English Jesuits, are also informed by the numerous attacks on the Society which were circulating in print in England even before the arrival of the first members of the mission.[82] Given these attacks, the Jesuit's stance was a defensive one. Campion wrote his *Brag*, originally entitled "To the Right Honorable Lords of Her Majestie's Privy Council," in anticipation of his probable arrest. In that event, a friend, Thomas Pounde, who was in possession of the document, was to circulate it in order to show how Campion was innocent of the charges made against him. Pounde jumped the proverbial gun, however, and distributed the *Brag* while Campion was still at liberty. As a result, the Jesuit became the most wanted man in England.

In the *Brag,* Campion strikes a tone that is somewhat at odds with the instructions

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[81]CSP Rome (1572-78) 28-9.

[82]Among the most famous of these is William Charke's 1580 translation of Christopher Francken's *A conference or dialogue discovering the sect of Iesuites: most profitable for all Christendome rightly to know their religion*. Francken was a former member of the Society who left the Roman church. His bitter attack on his former confreres insists on their hypocrisy and deceitfulness. (London, 1580 STC 11325, f. iv.)

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he had received from his religious superiors. After having been discouraged from any direct encounters with heretics, Campion nonetheless invites Protestant theologians to debate him. Knowing that he might have incurred the disapproval of the superior general and the Pope, Campion wrote a letter explaining his course of action:

> I had put in writing in the form of propositions some very reasonable postulates and demands. I admitted that I was a priest of the Society who had come to England with the purpose of spreading Catholic faith, teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments. I begged audience with the Queen and the principal men of the kingdom, and I challenged my adversaries to a contest. I decided to keep one copy by me for when I should be taken before the magistrates. The other I gave to a friend, so that if they should lay hold of me and my possessions, the other might be passed around indefinitely. My friend, far from concealing it, had it printed and published. (Edwards, *Elizabethan Jesuits* 88-91).

Reaction to the *Brag* was swift and severe. Several anti-Jesuit tracts appeared and a royal proclamation, "Ordering Return of Seminarians, Arrest of Jesuits," was issued on 10 January 1581:

> Being further given to understand that there are divers of her subjects that have been trained up in the said colleges and seminaries beyond the seas, whereof some of them carry the name of Jesuits under the color of a holy name to deceive and abuse the simpler sort, and are lately repaired to this realm by special direction from the pope and his delegates, with intent not

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> only to corrupt and pervert her good and loving subjects in matter of conscience and religion, but also to draw them from the loyalty and duty of obedience and provoke them, so much as shall lie in them, to attempt somewhat to the disturbance of the present quiet that through the goodness of Almighty God and her majesty's provident government this realm hath these many years enjoyed. (Hughes and Larkin 483).

The Jesuits escalated what might be called "a battle of the books" in that Parsons successfully established a secret printing press in order to disseminate Catholic texts. Among the first of these was Campion's *Rationes Decem*, which not only responded to anti-Jesuit attacks that had appeared after the publication of the *Brag*, but also provided ten reasons why Catholicism was the true church. Campion mined sacred scripture, the ecumenical councils, and the fathers of the church in order to prove the strength of his position. Particularly important among the issues treated by Campion were the sacrificial nature of the mass and the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist.[83] The circumstances surrounding the first distribution of Campion's work are indicative of his deliberately confrontational style. When students and professors arrived in the University Church of St. Mary's in Oxford on 27 June 1581, to hear degree candidates defend their theses, they found copies of *Rationes Decem* on their seats. How they got there remains a mystery, but that Campion was behind this theatrical stunt is indisputable, as is the fact that it was deliberately calculated to provoke outrage. It also provoked an intensified search for

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[83]A translation of *Rationes Decem* can be found in J.H. Pollen's *Campion's Ten Reasons*.

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Campion, and he was arrested less than a month later. After an elaborate show trial during which a tortured and exhausted Campion was "allowed" to debate several spokesmen for the established church, the Jesuit was taken from the Tower to Tyburn on 1 December, where he was hanged, drawn, and quartered. Shortly after Campion's death, Parsons fled to the continent where he would manage the affairs of the English mission until his own death, and as time went on his approach became less and less pastoral and more and more political.[84]

Had Aquaviva not become superior general upon the death of Fr. Mercurian, it is quite possible that the English mission would have been terminated after having produced its first martyr. The new general, however, remained committed to the project and sent two more missionaries to replace Campion and Parsons. The more notable of the two was Jasper Heywood, John Donne's uncle. Heywood was a remarkable, if troublesome Jesuit,

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[84]Parsons's politics and his penchant for diplomatic intrigue are the stuff of Jesuit (and anti-Jesuit) legend. Recently, a rather authoritative biography of the man has appeared, and its author, Francis Edwards, attempts to set the record straight in regard to Parsons's involvement at various European courts where he advocated for the overthrow of Elizabeth. Shortly after fleeing England, Parsons was determined to work for the conversion of James VI of Scotland, hoping that a Catholic James might attack England and succeed Elizabeth. In a letter to Aquaviva dated 21 October 1581, Parsons writes, "on the conversion of Scotland depends every hope, humanly speaking of the conversion of England" (Hicks, *Letters of Persons* 108-109). For the next five years he labored toward this end, and his efforts were enthusiastically supported by William Allen. Both certainly had correspondence with Mary Stuart. Only when Parsons seemed on the verge of encouraging the assassination of Elizabeth did the Jesuit general intervene. In a letter to Parsons, Aquaviva warned, "it will behoove the Society to be very careful about becoming mixed up in that matter; it will be fitting rather for the Society to keep out of it, since it little becomes our Institute." After James and Elizabeth authorized the Anglo-Scottish League on 5 July 1586, in which the latter agreed not to impede the former's eventual accession to the English throne, Parsons turned his attention to instigating for a Spanish invasion of England.

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and his family connections are obviously important to this project. Jasper and Donne's mother, Elizabeth, were the children of John Heywood, an epigrammist of considerable acclaim. After having been educated with Princess (later Queen) Elizabeth, Jasper studied at Oxford. His childhood connection with the future Queen likely accounts for the fact that, once imprisoned, Heywood is never tortured; and instead of being executed for treason, he is merely exiled. Heywood fled England and joined the Jesuits in 1562 and afterward studied and taught at the Society's school in Dilligen. It is somewhat surprising that the superior general sent him back to England since he seems to have caused some troubles in 1570. He proved less than diplomatic in his dealings with local businessmen with whom he debated the morality of charging interest. He caused such a disturbance that the provincial superior of Germany asked Aquaviva to remove him from the province. Given this track record, it might have seemed obvious that Heywood was not cut out for work in so delicate a situation as England. Nonetheless, he was assigned to the mission and was named acting superior in Parsons's absence.[85] In that role he appears to have exacerbated tensions between the older, Marian clergy and the newly arrived seminary priests and their Jesuit teachers. Heywood took it upon himself to call meetings of the Catholic clergy, secular as well as religious; and he instructed them as to how they should conform to Tridentine innovations. He made much of the fact that Jesuits enjoyed special faculties with regard to the sacrament of confession, and this was understandably perceived by diocesan priests as an example of Jesuit arrogance.

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[85]For more on Heywood see Dennis Flynn, "The English Mission of Jasper Heywood, S.J.," *AHSI* 54 (1985) 45-76.

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Heywood's standing in the eyes of the secular clergy is, to a significant extent, a sign of things to come. When Mercurian expressed his reservations about sending members of the Society to England, he had been worried about how things would evolve without any properly constituted ecclesiastical authority in place. He intuited that secular clerics would resent taking orders from a religious rather than a bishop. These tensions which begin with Heywood will color the history of English Catholicism for decades to come. Even more important, in terms of its significance for Southwell, is the fact the Heywood was removed from England in part because he opposed the political machinations of Parsons and Allen. Like Aquaviva, Heywood was wary of diplomatic intrigue, and he saw firsthand how reports and rumors about Parsons's and Allen's activities at the courts of various continental powers caused Catholics in England to suffer the effects of increased persecution. He was also opposed to the importation of controversial books and pamphlets. His less confrontational style and his desires for what might be called peaceful co-existence seem to anticipate Southwell's own approach.[86] That

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[86]The conflict between Parsons and those including Heywood and Southwell over Jesuit involvement in secular politics ultimately came to a head when the order met in general congregation in 1594. A general congregation is the Society's highest governing body and meets only infrequently. In fact, there have been only thirty-four in the course of the order's history. In the year before Southwell's death, Jesuits from around the world gathered in Rome and approved two decrees that forbade members of the order from involvement in secular affairs. According to Adrian Morley, these decrees had the machinations of Parsons very much in mind. (See *The Catholic Subjects of Elizabeth* I 125). Had Southwell known that the congregation took these measures, he would no doubt have been pleased. One decree stipulates that the superior general find "a method ... to prevent Ours (i.e., members of the Society) from thrusting themselves in any way into the business of princes and the making of wars. For experience has taught us that up to this time evil has resulted and such behavior has even given offense to many princes" (ARSI, Congr. 46, f. 160).

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Heywood deserves more credit for his work than he is usually given is a position argued rather recently by the Jesuit historian Richard Pollen:

> Heywood has not, I think, received the praise that is his due, for his prudence, and this is because he seems to have urged his measures in some wrong way, perhaps with nervous emphasis, or in excited words, or personal innuendoes, that robbed his wisdom of its true mead of praise.
>
> (ABSI 46/5A/1, Chapter VI, 51-52)

Ultimately, Parsons and Allen realized that sending Heywood home to England had been a mistake in terms of advancing their increasingly confrontational and antagonistic agenda, and he was recalled to the continent in 1583. His leave-taking, however, was to prove as complicated as his stay. Just before the ship carrying Heywood reached France, it encountered a violent storm and was forced to return to England. When the ship was searched, the Jesuit was arrested and kept in the Tower for over two years. Finally, after well-connected friends interceded on his behalf, he was exiled in January of 1585 and spent the last three years of his life in Naples. As Basset points out, the so-called "Jesuit Invasion" was, by the time of Southwell's appointment to the English mission, almost solely supported by Heywood; and "he posed a threat to the established church only in so far he was the author of a Hebrew Grammar, and even in those efforts Heywood was hampered by a bad case of the gout" (54). There was, then, "small reason for consolation ... [in] the current situation, for in the six years since Campion and Persons

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had first landed in England, progress had been slow" (Basset 109).[87] Indeed, Philip Caraman relates how, "on crossing, Southwell had not anticipated more than a few months of freedom" (41). This, perhaps, accounts for his "loss of nerve" on the eve of his departure. Convinced as he was that he faced certain death, Southwell described himself and his companion, Henry Garnet, as "two arrows shot at the same mark." Shortly before Southwell and Garnet set out for England, they had been preceded by William Weston, who like Southwell, accepted his assignment with trepidation. Writing to Aquaviva, Weston admitted to his fears: "My mind often turns in silence to the prisons, the many kinds of torture, the gallows, the quartering and the thought inspires me with bodily fear and horror" (Weston to Aquaviva, Paris 12 June 1584, ARSI, 91, ff. 155-156). These premonitions on the part of a member of the English mission were well warranted and the obvious cause of anxieties.[88] Furthermore, they are echoed by Southwell in a letter to his friend and fellow Jesuit, John Deckers:[89]

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[87]The first wave of Jesuit missionaries in England met with death, imprisonment or exile. As Basset reports, "Jesuits would have to concede that Campion's *Brag* looked very much like empty boasting when he, with Sheridan and Briant, swung at the end of a hangman's rope at Tyburn on 1st December 1581" (54).

[88]Weston's worst premonitions were realized when he was arrested by Walsingham's agents in the immediate aftermath of the Babington Plot. He was apprehended on 3 August 1586, just a week after the arrival of Southwell and Garnet. It is no wonder, then, that in his first letter to Aquaviva Southwell describes himself as being "hemmed in by daily perils, never safe even for the briefest moment" (Caraman, *Friends* 29).

[89]Deckers and Southwell met at the Jesuit college at Douai where both came under the influence of a theology professor, Leonard Lessius, who introduced them to each other. Deckers entered the Flemish novitiate just before Southwell joined the Society in Rome. The two maintained correspondence until Southwell returned to England. Southwell's attraction to Deckers seems to have caused him some scruples which he

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> It is true that I am being sent "among wolves," and likely enough "to be led to the slaughter." I only wish it were "as a lamb," for his name's sake who sent me.... The flesh is weak and can do nothing and even now revolts from what is proposed.... Plead then, for me, my Father. Perhaps it is the last time I shall address you; plead my cause - it is the cause of the Church - that I who play His part may so sustain it as God Himself, as the Angels, as the Society expects me, and throw away my life and blood, if I must, with fortitude and faith. (Devlin 99)

That Heywood proves prescient in his assessment of the effects of the strategy being pursued by Parsons and Allen is evinced when Catholics were blamed for the Throckmorton Plot of 1584 and the Parry Plot of 1585. Even if recusants had nothing to do with these planned assassinations, the machinations of Parsons and Allen provided ample grist for the Elizabethan propaganda mill.[90] In November of 1584, Parliament passed "An Act against Jesuits, seminary priests, and such other like disobedient persons," which gave members of the Society and newly arrived secular clergy forty days to leave

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resolves in his spiritual journal. In doing so, he relies once again on the compatibility of nature and grace: "Why should I not rather judge that God would bend by his favoure good mennes inclination unto him and marke him with this amiable collisance [cognizance] that who so viewed his person myght desyre the lyke comelynesse in his soul and thynck it there dutye to procure that he should bee most lyke unto God in goodnesse whome God hath made so lyke unto him in goodlynesse" (McDonald and Brown xxii). According to Foley, Deckers died at the College in Gratz on 10 January 1619 after serving as its Chancellor (307-08).

[90]An excellent essay on the connection between anti-Catholicism and nascent British nationalism is David Loades's "The Origins of English Protestant Nationalism" in *Religion and National Identity*, ed. Stuart Mews (Oxford, 1982) 217-34.

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the realm or be declared guilty of treason (27 Eliz. C.2). Typical of anti-Jesuit speeches in the House of Commons that urged the passage of the bill is this tirade delivered by Thomas Digges:

> These hellhounds, cladding themselves with the glorious name of Jesus, and such wretched souls as they bewitch with their wicked doctrine, are indeed the only dangerous persons to her Majesty .... They are fully persuaded her Majesty's life is the only stay why their Roman kingdom is not again established here. They also teach their disciples that it is not only lawful in this case to lay hands on God's anointed and to murder schismatic and excommunicate princes, but meritorious also: yea, they assure them Heaven for it ....[91]

Furthermore, Parliament also legislated harsh penalties to be inflicted upon those found guilty of providing for or harboring priests.[92] Just prior to Southwell's arrival in England, then, suspicions about the Society and its supporters were on the rise. So, too, were the anxieties attendant upon the missionaries and those whom they served. Shortly after Southwell landed in England, he took the occasion to write to his religious superior in Rome about those who were the cause of such suspicions and anxieties, and he roundly condemned them:

> The men who set on foot that wicked and ill-fated [Babington] conspiracy,

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[91]Quoted in Neale, *Elizabeth and Her Parliaments*, II, 44.

[92]For an extensive study of these penalties see Patrick McGrath and Joy Rowe, "The Elizabethan Priests: Their Harbourers and Helpers," *Recusant History* 19 (1989) 209-33.

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> ... did to the Catholic cause so great mischief, that even our enemies, had they had the choice, could never have chosen aught more mischievous to us or more to their mind ... yet the souls of catholics are more precious than our bodies; and when one reckons the price at which they are bought, it should not seem much to endanger our lives for their salvation. (Pollen, *Unpublished Documents* 314)

From the broader Catholic perspective, Southwell and his companions would have experienced other, if less life-threatening, anxieties. Schooled in Scholastic theology and the most recent teachings of the Council of Trent, at which his Jesuit brothers had taken the theological lead, Southwell reacted strongly to the diminishment of sacramental life within the Church of England and to the situation of his persecuted co-religionists. In terms of the three issues considered above, sacramental confession, the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist, and sacerdotal character, the Church of England was taking increasingly radical stands. As far back as the reign of Henry VIII, sacramental confession, for example, had come under attack. In his study of what he calls "the crisis of confession," Peter Marshall notes that as early as 1539 "the government had reason to become suspicious of what some reformers regarded as 'the privy chamber of treason'," and that "official suspicion [of auricular confession] became even more marked after King Henry's death and the rapid acceleration of religious reform" (28-29). Even while the practice of confession was urged in the Six Articles of 1539, the nature and purpose of the exercise was beginning to shift under the influence of reformers. It was becoming an occasion for examining penitents on "an abstract standard of religious knowledge," as opposed to an

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expression of "contrition, and sincerity of intention to amend, as an essential precondition for the reception of the eucharist." In other words, those with Protestant leanings were stressing "its utility rather than its integrity as a divine ordinance" (30). Southwell, on the other hand, might take a utilitarian view of poetry, but not of penance.

In 1548, with the publication of the new *Order of Communion*, reformers carried the day. General, as opposed to auricular confession was held up as the norm; and while the latter was not forbidden, it was considered "unnecessary in the context of a solifidian soteriology." Moreover, "Protestant preachers could find no mention of the practice in the Bible" (31). Except for an attempt to revive auricular confession during Mary's reign, it had entered, after 1548, what Marshall describes as "a terminal decline;" and this "abrogation of mandatory confession ... altered perceptions of the functions and duties of the priest, and the nature of priesthood itself." This alteration was, in fact, the desired effect. "Protestants," Marshall argues, "foresaw a humbling of priests as a consequence ... and rejoiced in the prospect" (81).

Southwell steps right into this sacramental breach with several poems that serve to reiterate the Roman insistence upon the necessity and benefits of confession. His confidence in the consoling nature of the sacrament, like his confidence in the pastoral potential of poetry, grows out of some fundamental convictions. In all of their efforts to help souls to conversion by means of consolation, the founding members of the Society insisted that the sacrament of confession was "the centerpiece of Jesuit ministry." It should not be surprising, then, that it will also enjoy pride of place among the sacraments in Southwell's poems. As O'Malley observes, "for the Jesuits, Penance enjoyed ...

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preeminence among the seven sacraments," and their approach to it was typical:

> The way the Jesuits approached the sacrament of penance and their insistence upon its consolatory features are symptomatic of the way they dealt with many traditional institutions. The Jesuits were, on the one hand, quite conventional, and they accepted the institutions and much of the practice surrounding them. On the other hand, they employed and interpreted them within a framework that to some extent refashioned them, even when they were not fully aware that they were doing so. (20)

Their confidence in the consoling power of penance was likely grounded in the experience of the *Exercises*.[93] The First Week of the retreat traditionally climaxes with a general confession of all the sins of one's life up to that point. Given their own experience of the sacrament, "Jesuits consistently recommended it to others from all walks of life as the keystone and expression of their conversion," and they were quite specific about their priestly role in the consoling "drama" of confession (139). Jesuit confessors were instructed to "always incline in the more humane direction," and to fashion themselves "vicars of the mild Christ" (142). This phrase occurs in Peter Favre's 1544 instruction to

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[93]The Jesuit focus on God's desire to bring consolation to believers in confession and in all things is also grounded in the *Exercises*. That Southwell's image of God was deeply influenced by this aspect of Ignatian spirituality is clearly evident in his *Spiritual Exercises and Devotions*. In one entry he describes the consoling nature of his own relationship with God: "If you love a friend so much, if he or she is so attractive that everything he asked of you, you would agree to; and if it is so sweet to sit and talk with him, describe your mishaps to him - then how much more should you betake yourself to God, the God of goodness, converse with him, show him your weakness and distress, for he has greater care of you than you have of yourself, indeed he is more intimately you than you are" (66).

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Jesuit confessors. Among the first companions, Ignatius singled out Favre as the one who best embodied the spirit of the Institute and as the most accomplished director of the *Exercises.* His basic theme in the confessional instructions is that Jesuits "should never be harsh but always sweet ... [and] they must ward off in themselves all pharisaic self-righteousness." O'Malley reports Favre's personal reaction on the occasion of hearing a general confession:

> Showing mercy to another in this sacrament brought tears to his eyes, for it helped him discover anew the mercy God had shown to Favre himself. He concluded by observing that if a just person wanted God to show kindness and not act out of the rigor justice required, that person must be kind and indulgent to all, "not stringent and overly just." (142).

Several of Southwell's poems are sites where he urges readers to avail themselves of this sacrament. While doing so, it becomes clear that he is also fashioning himself as a priest engaged in a two-pronged ministry of consolation: his verse and his power to absolve sins can be put to good pastoral use. Souls can be helped through penance as well as through poetry. In fact, the latter is understood as propaedeutic to the former. One such poem is the shorter of his two efforts entitled "Saint Peters Complaynte." In making her argument that while recusant poetry may be medieval in theme but hardly in style, Rosemary Woolf contends that Southwell's techniques point toward Donne's in that the former urges propositions upon readers "through a series of tightly worked conceits and paradoxes" (371). In this regard she might well have been thinking of this St. Peter poem which begins with Southwell playing upon words in order to score intellectual points:

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How can I live, that have my life deny'de?

What can I hope, that lost my hope in feare?

What trust to one that trewth it self defyde?

What good in him that did his God forsweare? (1-4)

All of these rhetorical questions serve to underscore Peter's miserable situation. He has foresworn his Lord out of fear. Moreover, what makes this fear so despicable is that it was occasioned by a woman: "But o infamous foyle: a maydens breathe/ Did blowe me down, and blast my soule to death" (17-18).[94] As a result, the church's "Chosen rocke" has become "a pastor, not to feede but to betray" (19-24). Southwell reminds his readers that Peter is no ordinary penitent. He recounts the apostle's deeds and numbers the privileges

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[94]Several scholars have investigated the extent to which this woman can be identified with Elizabeth I. Given the fact that elsewhere in his writings, and most notably in his *Humble Supplication to her Majesty the Queen*, Elizabeth is treated with the utmost respect and deference, it is hard to imagine that Southwell would attack her in this instance. The *Supplication* was written as a response to post-Armada propaganda, but unlike Parsons and others, who replied to anti-Catholic attacks "in language that yielded little in scurrility" to Protestant polemicists, "Southwell ... wrote in dignified phrases direct to the Queen, whom in total sincerity he addressed as 'Most Mighty and most merciful, most feared and best beloved Princess'" (Caraman, *Friendship* 63). The piece is typical in terms of Southwell's conciliatory approach to his antagonists. He defends the Roman church and its clergy in no uncertain terms, but he is obedient to his Jesuit superiors in remaining above the worst of the fray. As R.C. Bald notes in his Introduction to a 1953 edition of the treatise, "the after-history of the *Supplication* is curious": "[It] was eventually published in 1600, not so much to appeal for sympathy for the Catholics as to embarrass the Jesuits" (xii). In the midst of the growing controversy between religious and secular clergy, anti-Jesuit seminary priests tried to show how Southwell was willing to make accommodations to the prevailing political powers by pointing to passages in which the poet addressed the excommunicated Queen with "courtly compliments" (xvii). According to Bald, "Southwell's own feelings, no less than his experience in the mission, had taught him the vital necessity, if English Catholicism was to survive, of reconciling loyalty to Church and State. There is no question how far removed his position was ... from that of Allen and Persons" (xxii).

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granted to him by Christ, including the power to forgive sins: "I once designed Judge to loose and bynde/ Now pleade at mercyes barr as guilty thrall" (43-44). The model disciple must now become the model convert in search of consolation. Peter once had faith enough to confess that Jesus was Lord (40), and now he must find remorse enough to confess his sins:

> O tongue, the first that did his godhedd sounde,
>
> How couldst thow utter such detesting wordes,
>
> That every word was to his hart a wounde,
>
> And lawnc'd him deeper than a thowsand swords? (61-64)

After examining his conscience and recognizing the gravity of his offense, Peter is moved to "deepe remorse" signaled by "teares." In hope of future comfort, Peter asks Jesus to follow the very same advice that both Jeronimo Nadal and Peter Favre gave to Jesuit confessors. He begs him to "lett myldnes temper ... deserved hate" (70).

In a companion piece entitled "S. Peters remorse," the roles prescribed for penitent and priest are reinforced. Again, the examination of a "selfe blaiming conscience" results in "streames of weeping eies" (2-4). Peter models for Southwell's readers how it is that motions can stir in a sinner's soul.[95] He understands and admits that fear has led him to

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[95]Similar modeling is found in other poems which feature repentant figures from the Old and New Testaments. In "David's Peccavi," the King of Israel laments his behavior in the aftermath of the Bathsheba incident: "But wit and will must now confesse with shame,/ Both deed and doome to have deserved blame" (23-24). Readers observe a remorseful soul in torment, reduced to a diet of tears and nights without sleep: "My teares my drink, my famisht thoughts my bread;/ Day full of dumps, Nurse of unrest the night,/ My garments gyves, a bloody field my bed" (7-10). Exemplary remorse is also expressed by Mary Magdalene in "Mary Magdalene's blush." As Shuger notes, Southwell's appropriation of the most famous of all fallen women exemplifies "the deeply ingrained

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"highest treasons," but he trusts that "mercy may relent and temper justice rod" (24-25). The sinner again sounds Nadal's and Favre's note in reminding himself and the reader that God, whom the confessor represents, is a "milde Lorde" who can provide "comfort":

> O milde and mighty Lord,
>
> Amend what is amisse:
>
> My sinne my soare, thy love my salve,
>
> Thy cure my comfort is. (53-56).

The mildness of Jesus as expressed in the act of forgiveness is also stressed in Southwell's most frequently anthologized piece, "The Burning Babe." Here, for example, the speaker employs a traditional Ignatian composition of place in order to summon up images of a "newly borne" Christ Child. This "pretty Babe" is in tears because "none approach to warme their harts" (15). Were they to do so, their "shame and scornes" would be turned to mere ashes by the "fire" of his love. Men with "defiled souls" are invited to approach a Jesus who wants nothing else but "to work them to their good" (26). The Christ Child is modeling the behavior prescribed for confessors. The speaker learns that the initial anxieties which caused him to lift up "a fearful eye" toward this vision prove groundless. There is nothing threatening in the scene, just as there ought to be nothing threatening about the sacrament of penance rightly administered. Even the purifying fire

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tendency of all men in the ancient and Renaissance world, to use women to think with" (*Bible* 185). Here, Mary's repentance is meant to be educative. Just as she learned from her remorse, so should Southwell's readers: "Remorse doth teach my guiltie thoughts to know,/ How cheap I sould, that Christ so dearely bought" (9-10). At the poem's end Mary invites the readers to join her in admitting their sinfulness: "Lament O soules, sense spoileth you of grace" (32).

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toward which the penitent is drawn seems more comforting than dangerous. It is hardly burning out of control; instead, "Mercie blowes on the coales" (22). In the last lines of the poem we learn that the occasion for the contemplation is Christ's nativity:

> With this he vanisht out of sight,
>
> And swiftly shrunk away,
>
> And straight I called unto minde,
>
> That it was Christmasse day. (29-32)

It may seem a bit odd to write a penitential poem on so festive a day, but it fits Southwell's scheme in terms of connecting the celebration of the Incarnation with a sacrament that can also bring great consolation. Christmas, as opposed to Advent and Lent, is not traditionally considered a penitential season, but Southwell seems to be suggesting that it might be appropriate for confessors and penitents alike to look to the qualities evinced by Christ at his birth.

In another poem that seems related to an Ignatian composition of place, "Sinnes heavie load," the speaker watches Jesus on the way of the cross, and the point here is also to foreground Christ's kindness to repentant sinners. The central images of the poem all have to do with falling: the sinner has obviously fallen, and so has Christ. The fall of the former is metaphorical, whereas the fall of the latter is quite literal. According to traditional forms of devotion such as the Stations of the Cross, Jesus stumbled three times while being led from Pilate's court to Calvary. While this tradition is not based on scriptural accounts, synoptic or Johanine, it seems that by the end of the fifteenth century European churches were decorated with carvings that memorialize events associated with

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the Passion and Death of Christ.[96] In typical fashion, Loyola adapts and incorporates these traditional images into his *Exercises*. Southwell goes a step further and imagines the scenes as related to sacramental confession. Again, Christ is modeling for future confessors. The point is that they should follow Christ in refusing to be "severe," even when such a reaction might seem justified. If Christ could be kind to sinners while enduring excruciating pain, all the more must confessors avoid severity in the sacramental context. The poem opens with a prayer in which the speaker admits how it is his own sins which have caused Christ to stumble, and he is glad of it: "But had they not to earth thus pressed thee,/ Much more they would in hell have pestred me" (5-6). This represents a new twist on the *felix culpa* tradition, and in a flash of wit he also points out how his sins must be heavier than the earth itself. Christ, the new Atlas, could easily prop "the Globe of earth" on "one finger" without so much as breaking a "sweat" (7-9), but sin has caused him to "fall flat to the ground" (12).

After using a stanza to apostrophize sin itself (13-18), the speaker speculates about sin's possible effects on him in the life to come: "Alas, if God himselfe sinke under sinne,/ What will become of man that dies therein?" (17-18). He proceeds to draw a parallel between Christ's three falls on the *via dolorosa* and his three "falls" in salvation history. The latter include his decent into Mary's womb at the Incarnation (20), his harrowing of

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[96]The number of stations varied from country to country until Jan van Paesschen's *The Spiritual Pilgrimage* was published at Louvain in 1563. Because this work proved so popular, it is credited with being the source for the fourteen station version of the devotion that is now seemingly universal. Southwell likely had this version of the stations in mind since earlier versions have Jesus falling only once. See Michael Walsh, *Dictionary of Catholic Devotions* 250-52.

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"sathans cave" (32), and his second coming. All of these "falls" are acts of love which should increase the repentant sinner's sense of consolation and hope. The speaker points out how Christ treats those who are "the cause of [his] unrest." In contrast to God the Father, who was "often ... severe" (27), Christ proves to be exceedingly kind to those who sin against him: "O loving Lord that so doost love thy foe,/As thus to kiss the ground where he doth goe" (23-24). The Christ who forgives sins "seal'st a peace with a bleeding kiss" (28). Likewise, confessors should imitate their "Milde Lorde" in granting pardon and peace to sinners.

At least two of Southwell's poems which touch on the necessity and benefits of sacramental confession strike a note of some urgency. Southwell is concerned that his readers not delay in seeking forgiveness. In "A Phansie turned to a sinners complaint," the Jesuit's line by line parody of Edward Dyer's poem about the complaint of a spurned lover, sinners are urged to get forgiven while they can.[97] The sinful speaker in the piece understands that his transgressions have not entirely blotted out the enduring power of grace, which causes him to suffer from a troubled conscience:

Yet God's must I remaine,

By death, by wrong, by shame;

I cannot blot out of my heart,

---

[97]Southwell's familiarity with Dyer's work is often attributed to the poet's friendship with the musician, William Byrd. The two seem to have met soon after Southwell arrived in England, and the occasion "gave Southwell the opportunity of making himself familiar with the new forms of English verse still current only in manuscript, such as the work of Sir Edward Dyer, the poet and courtier, well known to Byrd" (Caraman, *Friendship* 21).

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That grace wrought in his name. (105-8)

He expresses remorse for his sins, admittedly adapting "the faining Poets stile" to "figure forth" his "greefe not fain'd" (146-49), and he worries that the time to repent is passing all too quickly. He fears that he will be found "Unworthy of relieefe/That craved it too late" (69-70). The very same worry surfaces in the poem "Loss in delaies." Here, Southwell twists the *carpe diem* trope to make a case for confession. He employs imagery to describe the passing of time that rivals Marvell's in its oddity. While in "To His Coy Mistress" Marvell focuses on Time's "slow-chapt power" (39-40), Southwell highlights his hairstyle:

Time weares all his lockes before,

Take thy hold upon his fore head,

When he flies he turns no more,

And behind his scalpe is naked,

Workes ajournd have many stayes,

Long demurres breede new delaies. (13-18)

The sinner is urged to seize the day, or the forelocks, as it were, and make a confession: "Happie man that soone doth knocke" (41). The healing effects of the sacrament are obvious enough: "Seeke thy salve while sore is greene,/ Festered wounds aske deeper launcing" (19-20).

Southwell's concern for promoting the sacrament of confession with some urgency may be related to his sense of filial duties as much as to his sense of mission. It is hard to read these several poems without being reminded of Southwell's advice to his father who

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had fallen away from the Roman church. Devlin notes that for Southwell, as well as for other English Jesuits, "the longing to bring spiritual help to his family played a great part in his vocation to an active [as opposed to monastic] order" (201).[98] In 1589, when the poet's father seemed close to death, Southwell wrote to him, urging him to return to the church by means of sacramental confession. He acknowledges the awkwardness of his position by writing that "He may be father to the soul that is a son to the body, and requite the benefit of his temporal life by reviving his parent from spiritual death" (42). After describing in no uncertain terms his father's proximity to death, he asks, "Why then do you not at the least devote that small remnant and surplusage of these your latter days, procuring to make atonement with God, and to free your conscience from such corruption as by your schism and fall hath crept into it?" (50). In a closing passage that acknowledges his father's dire straights while describing them in terms designed to underscore the promised consolation which Southwell believes only confession can bring, he writes,

> Howsoever therefore the soft gales of your morning pleasures lulled you in slumbery fits; howsoever the violent heats of noon might awake affections; yet now, in the cool and calm of the evening, retire to a Christian rest and close up the day of your life with a clear sunset: that leaving all darkness

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[98]Southwell had in fact contemplated joining a Carthusian monastery before he entered the Society. He admits as much in a letter written to Deckers in 1580: "I was in two minds about my vocation -- tossed on a tide of suggestions, now making for the good ship 'Bruno,' now for the ship 'Ignatius,' and reaching neither; in fact I was drowning in a torrent of temptations, until at last I steered a sensible course and went to my Confessor. But he would say nothing except the same thing over and over again in different words: 'Stick to the Society, stick to your first vocation" (Devlin 30-31).

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> behind you and carrying in your conscience the light of grace, you may escape the horror of eternal night, and pass from a mortal day to an everlasting morrow. (64)

I want to conclude my comments on Southwell's poetic approach to sacramental confession by returning to his second St. Peter poem, the longer version of "St. Peters Complaint," which makes a case that is remarkably similar to the one subsequently found in Donne's Divine Meditation 1. Both poets remind God how it hardly seems right that the Creator should abandon his work. Southwell's St. Peter asks,

> Did mercy spin the thread
> To weave in justice loom,
> Wert thou a father to conclude
> With dreadfull judges doom?
>
> It is a small relief
> To say I was thy child,
> If as an ill deserving foe
> From grace I be exiled. (33-40)

Likewise, Donne inquires, "Thou hast made me, And shall thy worke decay?" (1). Once the question is posed, however, the two poets take very different approaches. St. Peter, and Southwell along with him, trust in the efficacy of confession. It is their hope that "penance will prevail" and that "sorrow will sue release" (5-6). Donne, on the contrary, has no such faith in the saving power of confession. He is in "despaire" because he cannot

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even so much as look to God without God's leave:

> Onely thou art above, and when toward thee
>
> By thy leave I can looke, I rise againe;
>
> But our old subtle foe so tempteth me,
>
> That not one houre I can my selfe sustaine; (9-12)

The difference here is telling. In the following chapter on Donne I will consider why he seems to doubt the efficacy of sacraments, especially the sacrament of ordination. Such doubts have complicated causes which will be treated at some length. They serve, ultimately, to make him question the relationship between nature and grace. As a result, it is difficult, if not impossible, for Donne to see any relationship between the exercise of priesthood and writing poetry. For Southwell, however, the connection is grounded in his absolute faith in sacramentality: his own as an ordained priest and that of his verse. Priesthood and poetry are both understood as means of mediating the presence of God to the men and women whom he served. He appreciates and uses both insofar as they are apostolic instruments and can bring people the consolation that is found in conversion. In this regard, his poetry reinforces his notion of how he is to function as a priest. He writes poetry because he is a priest, and in the lines that he produces he articulates and shores up his self-understanding.

Southwell's confidence in the efficacy of sacraments accounts, I think, for the fact that his poems are very rarely self-referential. Unlike Donne, whose model for ministry is almost exclusively limited to preaching, Southwell writes as though he were presiding at a sacrament. For the most part, he points away from himself and toward some other

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presence which he would regard as more real than imagined. In order to get at this difference it is helpful to consider the perspective of John Henry Newman. After his conversion to Roman Catholicism, Newman makes this distinction: "The preacher is different from the minister of the sacraments. The latter is as it were impersonal. The former is personal or definite. In particular the ... preacher comes to his audience with a name and a history" (412). Newman might well have been commenting on the difference between the poetry of Southwell and Donne.

Southwell's poems rarely, if ever, even so much as hint at the author's "name and history." To the contrary, he seems to cultivate a kind of sacramental or ritual anonymity. This is in opposition to Donne, who frequently makes himself the center of attention in his religious verse. Even if he might have, it would never occur to Southwell to attract the reader's notice, much less God's, by punning on his own name, as in "When thou hast done, thou hast not done" ("A Hymne to God the Father" 5). Perhaps Southwell's "Sequence on the Virgin Mary and Christ" and Donne's "La Corona" provide the most obvious topical parallel in the works of the two priests. In the former, the first person pronoun is used only once in all of the sequence's 234 lines, and then it is as a reminder to the otherwise unidentified speaker that he is to make of himself a gift to God: "God is my gift, himselfe he freely gave me:/ Gods gift am I, and none but God shall have me" ("The Nativitie of Christ" 17-18). The concept of making an oblation of self, or of anything else, to God on one's own initiative seems to make Donne extremely anxious. In response to that anxiety, and perhaps as a result of it, Donne's religious verse is much more self-absorbed than Southwell's. "LaCorona," for example, opens with as many references to

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the writer as it does to God: "my hands" (1); "my low devout melancholie" (2); "my muses white sincerity" (6); "give me/ A crown of glory" (7-8). And ultimately, it ends on a similarly self-referential note:

> Bright torch, which shin'st, that I the way may see,
>
> Oh, with thy own blood quench thy owne just wrath,
>
> And if thy holy Spirit, my muse did raise,
>
> *Deigne at my hands this crown of prayer and praise.* ("Ascention" 11-14)

Once Donne doubts the efficacy of sacraments, particularly the sacrament of his own ordination, he is left almost entirely to his own poetic devices. Sacred poetry becomes primarily a means of self-exploration for Donne, whereas for Southwell it was an exercise of ministry, an opportunity for priestly service.

The ritual or sacramental anonymity characteristic of Southwell's priestly poetry is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in his works concerning the Eucharist. Southwell was certainly aware of the tremendous amount of anxiety generated by reformers' attacks on the relationship between priesthood and the sacrificial nature of the sacrament of the altar, but his approach to such anxiety will always be more pastoral than apologetic, stressing consolation rather than confrontation. As Peter Marshall observes, "the liturgical experiments of the mid-sixteenth century raised many questions about the function and status of an ordained ministry that could not be settled quickly or painlessly" (85). When Southwell arrived in England, he did not hesitate to use poetry as a way of responding to these questions; but, typically, he does not directly address attacks on the ecclesiastical office to which he has been ordained. Instead, he eschews all references to himself and his

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own situation, preferring, instead, to respond to pastoral problems caused by what Duffy calls "the stripping of the altars." Southwell writes poems which aim to shore up belief in Roman Catholic eucharistic doctrine and practice, but he never meets attacks on priesthood head on, and he never overtly insists on presbyteral prerogatives. The real presence of Christ in the consecrated host and wine and the effect of that presence in the communicant seem more important to him than the power and prestige which once belonged to the priesthood. Unlike Donne, who is occasionally defensive both in his pulpit and in his poems about the "titles and preheminences" accruing to the "ministry," Southwell is far more self - and sacerdotally - effacing ("To Mr. Tilman" 49-50). In his eucharistic poems he speaks for the church, not for himself; and in doing so he is taking up "a strongly Christological strand in [Catholic] sacramental theology which emphasized the centrality of Christ as primary cause in the consecration of the eucharistic elements" (Marshall 71). This way of thinking has deep roots in the church's history and, as will become clear, stands at the center of the Jesuit approach to priesthood:

> That the priest was [thought to be] essentially an agent of Christ, the real worker in the eucharistic miracle, was an Augustinian concept which became deeply rooted in the theological consciousness of the Middle Ages. At a more accessible level it was promulgated by fourteenth-century clerical manuals such as *Manipulus Curatorum*, and by the insistence in the *Imitation of Christ* that in the mass "God is there the principal doer and the invisible worker." In his *Answer to a Poisoned Book*, Thomas More contended that "when the priest ministereth us this meat [the eucharist], let

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us not think that it is he that giveth it us; not the priest I say whom we see, but the Son of Man, Christ himself, whose own flesh not the priest there giveth us, but as Christ's minister delivereth us." To employ a modern political analogy, the celebrant was more a delegate than a representative. (Marshall 71-72)

That Jesuits took up this approach to priesthood, which Marshall describes as "a truly 'ministerial' view of the eucharistic celebrant," is revealed in the behavior of Ignatius Loyola himself (72). After being ordained, the Jesuits' founder waited a year before he celebrated his first mass. This seems to indicate that he did not seek ordination because he was especially anxious to exercise the power of the priestly office. For Loyola, priesthood was one among a variety of ministries which he would exercise at the appropriate time. It is also telling, as noted above, that it is difficult to determine the exact date of Southwell's ordination because he makes no reference to it in his own writings. He was ordained in due course during his Jesuit formation, but the event was clearly not marked with much fanfare.[99] After he became a priest he continued to do the same sort of work he had been doing at the English College as a "scholastic." As O'Malley points out, this was in no way exceptional:

As we begin to focus more and more on the [Jesuit] ministers, we must

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[99]It is important to note that Jesuit formation in no way culminates with ordination to the priesthood, as does the formation of diocesan clergy. According to the *Constitutions*, Jesuits are not considered fully formed and incorporated into the body of the Society until after they have completed a post-ordination year known as tertianship. Once the requirements of tertianship, which include another thirty-day Ignatian retreat, have been fulfilled, a Jesuit is called to final vows. It is at this point that Jesuits profess the so-called "fourth vow" of special obedience to the pope.

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> note a fact that has rarely elicited comment. By the time the Society was approved in 1540, all ten of the first members had been ordained to the priesthood. We tend to assume, therefore, that the ministry in which the first generation of Jesuits engaged was all done by priests. This assumption seems confirmed by the prominent role in their ministry of sacramental confession, which of course could be administered only by the ordained. In fact, however, a great deal of their ministry was done by "scholastics," that is, members who were still awaiting ordination ..... The Jesuit documents are replete with instances of ... preaching by scholastics, sometimes done in solemn settings, as in the cathedral in the presence of the local bishop and magistrates of the city. Occasionally scholastics guided persons in the *Spiritual Exercises*, and they were especially active in catechesis and the works of mercy. They of course did much of the teaching in the colleges. (79-80)

Given the highly charged atmosphere surrounding early modern arguments about the nature and purpose of ordained ministry, it is rather surprising that "ordination to the priesthood is in effect not mentioned in the *Constitutions*" (O'Malley 157). Nevertheless, as O'Malley notes, "the psychological reality that primarily grounded [Jesuits'] lives and their ministry was membership in the Society, not being in orders" (159). It may be precisely on account of this, then, that Southwell was in a particularly advantageous position in regard to writing about the role of the priest. Because his identity was firmly "grounded" in the Society long before he was ordained, he could address attacks on the

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relationship between the priesthood and the Eucharist with subtlety and without becoming personally defensive. The sense of himself which he enjoyed as a Jesuit afforded him the ability to write eucharistic poems marked by a significant degree of anonymity and devoid of any obvious animosity toward those who held opposing views.

The tenor of sixteenth-century Protestant attacks on the Eucharist and the priesthood has already been described in previous chapters. According to Marshall, "Protestants scoffed at the intensity (or as they saw it, the superstitious folly) of the people's devotion to the consecrated host" (42).[100] From about the middle of the century on, "the mass came to divide rather than unite English Christians." Given the vehemence of these attacks and the contestatory attitudes of people on both sides of the Reformation divide, the reasonableness of Southwell's response in his eucharistic poems is all the more remarkable. Other priests were less measured in their reactions to reformers' attempts to undermine sacramental theology and sacerdotal power. As Marshall reports,

> Confronted with growing evidence of disbelief in the real presence, some priests might be drawn to desperate measures to restore their credibility. In 1544 the London *Grey Friars' Chronicle* reported how a Kentish priest had been punished "for cutting of his finger and making it bleed on the host at his mass for a false sacrifice," a faked eucharistic miracle corresponding

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[100]Lest I give the impression that all English Protestants objected to Catholic teaching on the Eucharist and priesthood for the same reasons, I want to acknowledge Peter Marshall's important observation on this very point: "Although English Protestants evinced a great variety of eucharistic belief, many, no doubt, like Archbishop Cranmer, holding different views at various times, all were united by their rejection of transubstantiation and detestation of Catholic eucharistic piety" (75).

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> to the pattern familiar to the sermon literature and popular iconography of the middle ages. The vehemence of the conservatives' assertion of a real physical presence of Christ in the sacrament mirrored the evangelical refusal to accept that this was so. (75)

In responding to such refusals to believe, Southwell, too, turns to the middle ages for his inspiration; but his solution to what he perceives to be a pastoral problem relies more on Scholastic theology than on sham theatricality.[101] In "A holy Hymne," entitled in the manuscripts, "Saint Thomas of Aquinas Hymne. Read on Corpus Christi Daye. Lauda Sion Salvatorem," Southwell translates and adapts traditional material in order, perhaps, to give it wider circulation in the vernacular. At the start, he points out how the feast was established for the purpose of celebrating the institution of the Eucharist at the Last Supper:

> A speciall theame of praise is read,
> A living and life giving bread
> Is on this day exhibited
> Which in the supper of our Lord,
> To twelve disciples at his bord,
> None doubtes but was delivered. (7-12)

In arguing for the universal acceptance of what was "delivered" on Holy Thursday, Southwell is refusing to engage in contemporary debates about communion. Instead, he

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[101]For confirmation that the Kentish priest's stunt is indeed theatrical, see *The Croxton Play of the Sacrament* in Bevington's *Medieval Drama*. Compared to the host-miracle play's bloody piety, the priest's self-inflicted wound seems very tame.

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wants to enable his readers to mark the great feast of Corpus Christi. If they are no longer able to celebrate with processions and mystery plays, at least they will have his rendering of Aquinas' poem: "For now solemnize we that day,/ Which doth with joy to us display/ The prime use of this mistery" (16-18).[102] That the church continues to do what Christ did is clear enough: "Guided by his sacred order/ Bread and wine upon our altars/ To saving host we sanctify" (28-30). And as McDonald and Brown note in their edition of the poems, the doctrine of the church, i.e., transubstantiation, is stated with equal clarity in ll. 37-60 (130):

> Under kindes two in appearance
>
> Two in shew but one in substance,
>
> Lie thinges beyond comparison:
>
> Flesh is meat, blood drinke most heavenly:
>
> Yet is Christ in each kind wholy
>
> Most free from all division. (37-42)

The last two lines of this stanza speak to an issue that was much debated in Reformation England. One of the major sticking points for Protestants was that in the

[102]It is interesting to note, in this regard, that Caraman speculates how it is likely that "it was Southwell's translations of these hymns that Garnet used later when he arranged for eucharistic processions in the grounds of Enfield Chase in the early days of the next reign" (*Friendship* 23). O'Malley also reports on the Jesuits' "special fondness" for the feast of Corpus Christi, noting that "Nadal urged solemn liturgy, with procession, in Jesuit churches for the feast." Moreover, "Jesuits probably did not need Nadal's encouragement to stage the great celebrations of Corpus Christi that became almost characteristic of them." These celebrations "were often much more elaborate than those elsewhere - with poetry, dialogues, banners, torches, drums, flutes, trumpets, and dance" (156-57).

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Catholic church only the priest received from the chalice. On those rare occasions when lay people received communion at all, it was only in the form of the host. Protestants interpreted this as yet another example of clerical eucharistic exclusivity. Southwell is responding to this interpretation by articulating a theological justification known as "the doctrine of concomitance, the belief that the entire Christ was present under either form" (Marshall 66).[103] Following this assertion, he subtly proceeds to underscore the Catholic insistence on the sacrificial nature of the sacrament. In doing so he relies on biblical typologies. The sacrifice of Christ at mass is "figured" and "signd by Isak on the altar,/ By the Lambe and pascall supper" (64-63). His approach here is to avoid polemics while employing a traditional poetic device to make his point.

In this long hymn, a single priest appears and only once. His function in the poem is to perform the fraction rite in which the host is broken before the reception of communion.

When the priest the hoast devideth,

Know that in each part abideth

All that the whole hoast covered,

Form of bread not Christ is broken,

Not of Christ but of his token

---

[103]Marshall points out how "the withdrawal of the wine from lay communicants in the course of the middle ages had been occasioned by a fear that the sacred species might be spilt or mishandled" (66). McBrien further explains that "according to the ... doctrine of transubstantiation, the whole Christ is present under each form, the consecrated bread and the consecrated wine. For that reason, Trent insisted, it is unnecessary to receive the Eucharist under both species" (764).

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Is state or stature altered. (55-60)

That Southwell chooses this aspect of the priest's role in the eucharistic liturgy seems significant and typical of this conciliatory poet, in that the action was not controversial. Had Southwell wanted to use his poem as a means of weighing in on contemporary liturgical disputes, he might have had his priest elevate the host rather than simply divide it. As Queen Elizabeth's aforementioned eucharistic anxieties at her coronation mass attest, the post-consecration elevation of the sacred species was the subject of considerable debate. According to Peter Marshall, "the elevation of the consecrated host, once the epitome of concord, now came to symbolize the divergence of religious attitudes" (74). Southwell does not want to foreground that divergence. The poem is certainly informed by a Tridentine approach to the Eucharist, but not in any way that would deliberately provoke debate.

This same reasonable and reserved approach to the sacrament is also found in "Of the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar." Again, as McDonald and Brown note, "at many points in the poem there are textual echoes and sometimes close paraphrase of the Latin Hymn [Lauda Sion]" (131). In fact, the first six lines here are a slightly more sophisticated arrangement of the ideas contained in ll. 19-27 of "A holy Hymn." In describing how Jesus's "Performinge Deede presaging signes did chase," Southwell seems to anticipate Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity," in which pagan gods are silenced and put to flight at the arrival of Christ (173 ff.). Southwell wants to set up an opposition between mere signs and real presences, the second of which can only be seen with the eyes of faith: "Though sences faile, yet faith is not deceiv'd'/ And if the wonder of the worke be newe,/

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Believe the worke because his word is trewe" (16-18). In Jesuit fashion, he urges readers to believe in Catholic eucharistic doctrine and practice precisely because it can bring unimagined consolation:

> Here truth beleefe, beleefe inviteth love,
>
> So sweet a truth love never yet enjoy'd,
>
> What thought can thincke, what will doth best approve
>
> Is here obteyn'd where no desire ys voyde. (19-22)

This stress on consolation is hardly surprising in a Jesuit's writing. As O'Malley points out, Jesuits, for the most part, "echoed traditional teaching about the spiritual benefits conferred by reception of the Eucharist. They generally add[ed] little ... except perhaps more emphasis on spiritual consolation" (153).[104]

Southwell notes some very physical attributes of the Eucharist, and he describes its good effects on all five senses (31-36). In true Jesuit fashion, these effects will "delight" the communicants "witt" and, subsequently, "wooe the will of every good choise" (37-38). Like his Jesuit contemporaries, Southwell seems to stress the salutary benefits of the sacrament. While others in the church recommended that people refrain from participating in communion on account of their unworthiness, early Jesuits were of the opinion that the

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[104]Throughout his writings Southwell makes explicit connections between the mission of the Society and his desire to provide consolation. The most obvious of these stands at the start of his *Epistle of Comfort* where he wants all credit for consolation to be attributed to the charism of his religious order. In his Preface to the Reader he writes, "and if through thy good disposition and tenderness of mind thou find any further contentment thereby that it would yield to thyself, whatsoever thou deemest praiseworthy attribute it to the spirit of that body, whereof I am an unworthy member, and to which next unto God, I owe what good soever is in me" (1).

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Eucharist was intended as much, if not more, for sinners than for saints. As a result of this position, they had to defend themselves against various opponents until Ignatius had to commission a book on the subject. The work, *De frequenti usu sanctissimi Eucharistiae sacramenti libellus,* by Cristoforo de Madrid, was published at the Roman College shortly before Southwell's arrival. As O'Malley reports, the author's "special target was the idea that one must make oneself worthy before approaching the Eucharist. [de Madrid] countered that virtue and great devotion were not prerequisites, for these were precisely what the Eucharist imparted" (154). Southwell seems to agree with his Jesuit predecessor when he notes that "Christes Final meale was fountayne of our good" and the "entrance ... to never ending grace," not the reward for it (2-5).

In a rare mention of those who refuse to believe in the real presence, Southwell compares them to "blynde men [who] see no light, [though] the sunne doth shyne" (43). He urges them to faith, noting how the power of reason will fail to comprehend the mysteries of God: "Men must with sounde and silent faith receive/ More then they can by sence or reason lerne" (51-52). As if to show that human wit is of some use, however, Southwell follows this assertion with a line containing a characteristic pun: "The god of hoastes in slender hoste doth dwell" (61-62). Reason may fail in its attempts to understand the ways of God, but it can respond to God's initiatives with exercises of poetic invention. In one final clever stanza, Southwell tries to convince non-believers by appealing to God's omnipotence, arguing that the miracle of transubstantiation is not so incredible as the doctrine of creation *ex nihilo*:

What god as auctor made he alter may,

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No change so harde as making all of nought:

If Adam framed was of slymye claye,

Bredd may to Christes most sacred flesh be wrought. (85-88)

It is not surprising that Southwell tries to defend a particularly Catholic doctrine by constructing an analogy based on a universally accepted Christian dogma. He seeks common ground as a starting point for winning converts. Like Loyola, he is willing "to go in their door," or at least a shared door, in order have them come out his.

Southwell also refers to eucharistic doctrine and practice in at least one less obvious poetic context. In "Mary Magdalene's Complaint at Christ's death," lines 19-24 seem to contain echoes of eucharistic controversy. Again, however, the tone of the piece is hardly antagonistic. The speaker laments her loss:

Where truth once was, and is not,

Shadowes are but vanitie:

Shewing want, that helpe they cannot:

Signes, not salves of miserie.

Paynted meate no hunger feedes,

Dying life each death exceedes.

It is possible that Southwell has the Church of England in mind when he contemplates sites which were formerly home to truth. Now, like Mary Magdalene, he mourns the substitution of "shadowes" and "signes" for that which was loved and gave life. The insufficiency of "paynted meate" is obvious enough, even when the hunger is spiritual. Both Mary Magdalene and Southwell bemoan the loss of the real presence of Christ.

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When Southwell approaches the issue of the limitations of the Protestant communion service in the form of a lament, he reveals his preference for reconciliation over retaliation. Most of his contemporaries would have come at the issue with the intention of instigating an argument. Southwell sees advantages in adapting the form of a lover's complaint, and in doing so he is showing himself obedient to his Jesuit superiors who ordered him to avoid arguments with heretics. As always, he writes poetry confident that it can mediate conversion through consolation. In "Content and Rich," another parody of Dyer's work, Southwell sums up what might be called his ecumenical program:

I wrastle not with rage
  While furies flame doth burn:
It is in vaine to stop the streme,
  Until the tide doth turn.

But when the flame is out
  And ebbing wrath doth end:
I turn a late enraged foe
  Into a quiet frend. (37-44)

If, as I contend, Southwell never loses confidence in the sacramentality that grounded his priesthood and his poetry, the same cannot be said in terms of his faith in himself. Throughout his works he returns to the issue of apostasy, and it alone occasions Southwell's rare, if oblique, references to himself. He seems almost haunted by the prospect of betraying Christ and the church, and it may be for this reason that Peter and

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Judas are such prominent figures in his poems. It is likely that some of Southwell's anxieties about remaining faithful are family-related. As is the case with Donne, his relatives were much involved in the religious machinations of Tudor England, an age which Basset describes as "unique for double-crossing" (62). According to Christopher Devlin, Southwell's most recent biographer, the poet's family was "well entrenched in that most privileged of classes, not the precarious *haute noblesse* of Plantagenet creation, but the Tudor-made oligarchy founded on church spoils" (3). It is indeed the case that the future Jesuit grew up on the grounds of a former Benedictine monastery in Horsham St. Faith near Norwich, and Devlin describes the poet's youth in rather dramatic terms:

> From the windows of his stately home he could see the bare ruined priory of Saint Faith which the Benedictine monks ... had left forever twenty-five years before his birth. His grandfather, Sir Richard Southwell, commissioner for the suppression, had watched them go without rancor but with satisfaction.... While his new mansion rose near by, the stripped priory became a home for birds and cattle or a leaking shelter for husbandmen against the weather. From its walls there vanished under coats of dirt a great thirteenth-century painting of the Crucifixion ..." (3)[105]

This same grandfather was called upon to witness against Thomas More and was later the

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[105]Devlin also reports that in his childhood Southwell was "aware of the presence of one-time monks, old men who had lost their pensions and still roamed the countryside as vagabonds" (6). It is interesting in this light to consider that when Southwell made up his mind to enter religious life he considered the monastic life as well as the Society of Jesus, ultimately deciding on the latter because it seemed the better suited for service to his family and his homeland.

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chief accuser at the trial of his boyhood friend, Henry Howard, the poet, Earl of Surrey. When the religious tide changed from Edward to Mary and then to Elizabeth, he "slipped adroitly from one party to another like a cormorant riding the waves" (Devlin 4). In this he seems to establish the pattern for many Southwells of succeeding generations. It was the poet's mother's family, the Copleys, who remained faithful to the Roman church, and it was through their influence that Robert was sent to study with the Jesuits at Douai. When Southwell begins to discern his vocation, the way in which his paternal relations obtained their property will come into play.

It was not simply Southwell's experience of his father's family abandoning and adopting religious commitments in compliance with the latest political trends that caused Robert to be anxious about fidelity. Many of those around him followed in his grandfather's footsteps. Basset reports that "apostasies were frequent under the mounting pressure of persecution," and of the first students whom Southwell met at the English College, "it has been reckoned that three died for their faith and ten apostatized" (67). In some respects, the situation of these priests warrants some sympathy:

> The moral dangers for all priests in England were very great. Constant references to fallen priests in recusant papers emphasize a loneliness and depression that should be obvious. Fear, bribery, idleness, lack of supervision and discipline proved a constant threat to men seeking to lead a celibate life. Many former priests became government informers, some attempted marriage, a few [even] entered Anglican ministry. (123)

Southwell's anxieties on this score get encoded in several of his poems. In "Christs

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sleeping friends," for example, the apostles are depicted as abandoning Christ in his hour of need. Gethsemane, not unlike Southwell's England, is a place where fidelity is put to the test. That fidelity has, in this case, an ecclesial as well as a personal dimension is implied when Southwell considers how the ship of the church is on the verge of sinking: "storming troopes in quarrels most unjust/ Against the barke of all our blisse conspire" (21-22). In lines that were intended to bring consolation to his co-religionists, and perhaps to reinforce his own priestly resolve, Southwell issues a summons and a warning:

> Awake ye slumbring wightes lift up your eies,
>
> Marke Judas, to teare your roote he strives,
>
> Alas the glorie of your arbor dies,
>
> Arise and guard the comfort of your lives. (37-40)

Several times in his poems Southwell expresses anxieties about being numbered among the many Romans who conform to the English church under threat of persecution. With Peter, for example, he worries about becoming "a pastor, not to feed but to betray" ("Saint Peters Complaynte" 24). The eucharistic overtones in this line are hard to miss, and Southwell is well aware of the Roman church's position on the validity of the Anglican Eucharist. According to it, those who betray the Roman church by accepting Anglican orders may no longer be able to feed their flock. The validity of the Eucharist they celebrate, or any other sacrament for that matter, save baptism, has been called into question.[106] In this poem, Peter serves as the prototype for all those whom Southwell

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[106]As the issue of sacramental validity will be explored at length in the following chapter on John Donne, I will pass over it here except to note that Southwell subscribed to such doubts. In his recently published edition of some letters of the poet, Thomas

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knew who had abandoned the church out of "servile fear" of death.

As an antidote to such fears, Southwell writes several moving works in which he recalls the example set by the martyrs. One of the most politically fascinating of these is "Decease release," which critics agree is a dramatic monologue delivered by Mary Stuart after she has begun her "heavenly raigne" (36).[107] The speaker in the poem announces how "Alive a Queen, now dead I am a Sainte" (13).[108] The instruments used in her execution are, in hindsight, understood as the means of her salvation. Others who come after her need not fear the "skaffold," the "blocke," the "hedman" or his "axe." The last of these, for example, "cut off [Mary's] cares from combred breste" (21-24). Southwell is not succumbing to pious sentimentality here. We know from his correspondence that he was no stranger to executions. As Basset reports, "when Southwell came to London his

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McCoog notes how Southwell refers to John Aylmer, the Anglican bishop of London, as "*pseudo-episcopus Londinensis.*" As McCoog explains, "because Roman Catholics did not recognize their ordination and consecration, Anglican bishops are frequently referred to as pseudo-bishops" (115).

[107]Janelle is among these critics, and he observes how "the beautiful poem ... refer[s] to the death of Mary Queen of Scots": "The allusions in it are throughout so clear as to leave no room for doubt; thus we know that it was written soon after Mary's execution, which took place on February 8, 1587" (159-60). Caraman concurs with Janelle on this score. When Mary was executed, "Southwell, like the Catholic body, considered her a martyr whose death obliterated in the eyes of God her past failings ... [and] without mentioning her name, Southwell was inspired to write a poem which can only refer to her. It is the deceased Queen who speaks" (33).

[108]That Mary's death inspires Southwell to write verse is another instance in which he shows himself to be at odds with the agenda being advanced by Allen and Parsons. They greet the news of her execution by drafting a memorandum on the claims of Philip II to the English throne. While one Jesuit writes a poem aimed at providing consolation for English recusants, another is plotting with continental political powers. See Hicks, *Letters of Persons* 299-303.

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first concern was with the Catholic prisoners in jail [and] he was also present at executions, mixing with the crowd and standing close to the scaffold to absolve his dying friends" (116).[109] Even in the face of violent death, the poet wants to believe that by such "losse of life [is] endles life assured" (20). Holding out this kind of hope consoles his readers and confirms the poet's self-identity.[110] Furthermore, Southwell has every reason to suspect that he will join the ranks of the martyrs, and soon after his arrest he is cast in that very role by Garnet in a letter to Aquaviva. What Mary Stuart does for Southwell, he is able to do for others. Of Southwell's suffering and death Garnet writes,

> And therefore if, as we hope, this is the work of a compassionate God, and not just the vengeance of a wrathful one, the catholic cause will receive more than slight benefit, for even though we cannot feel the sorrow or the pain because we have been deprived of our associate, our dearest Father assistant, still on the other hand we are refreshed in our awareness that, out

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[109]Southwell's first sermon in England was in fact delivered in a prison, Marshalsea, on the feast of Mary Magdalene. After hearing this homily, Caraman reports, "his congregation begged him for the text, which he later expanded into a small book which he gave the title *Mary Magdalene's Funeral Tears.*" The sermon was also heard by a government spy who reported the following to Francis Walsingham: "Among the guests there were three gentlewomen, two of them daughters of Sir John Arundel .... It was Magdalene's day, and the priest catechized the company with the doctrine of popish repentance, taking for his theme the story of Magdalene, absurdly applying the same to his purpose" (*Friendship* 27).

[110]Similar sentiments about how God will put martyrs to good use are expressed in Southwell's *Epistle of Comfort*: "And as the paper of old rotten shreds, oftentimes gathered out of unclean dunghills, by his industry maketh so fine, white and clean paper that it is apt to receive any curious drawing, painting or limning; so our scattered parts by you cast into dunghills, he will restore to such purity of perfection that they shall be more capable of his glorious ornament than they were before" (236).

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> of his afflictions and insults, God usually increases his honor, stabilises the church, and confounds his enemies. And this I see within me as the firmest of hopes, and I take the greatest consolation from the work of this man who never allowed his hopes to be vain ones. (Garnet to Aquaviva, 16 July 1592, ARSI 651/624).[111]

Finally, if the example of Mary Stuart and the other Elizabethan martyrs is not enough, Southwell has recourse to Christ himself. In a letter that is as typical of Southwell's prose as it is of his politics and piety, he reacts to the false rumor that he has been captured by pursuivants:

> They may say as often as they like that I am taken; but I shall endeavor, as long as I escape their hands, to let them know by deeds that I am not taken. Not that I shall undertake anything that can hurt the State; but I am determined never to desist from the works of my calling, these when done cannot long escape their notice; and they will know that there still lives one of this sort whom they have not taken.... The souls of Catholics are more precious than our bodies; and when we reckon the price at which they were bought, it should not seem much to endanger our lives for their salvation. That Sacred Blood is still warm, those wounds still open, and those bruises may still be seen, with which God redeemed the souls that we are tending.

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[111]That Southwell was aware of the role he was assuming in death seems to be indicated by the fact that he creates relics of himself on the way to Tyburn. As Caraman reports, "With a handkerchief between his bound arms he wiped the mud from his face and neck; then, looking out to the crowd, he rolled it up into a ball and threw it to an acquaintance whom he recognized below the gallows" (Friendship 110).

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At such a sight dangers may well be scorned, lest such precious pearls be lost. (Devlin 130)

As will become clear, the fact that Southwell believed he enjoyed such ready access to Christ sets him apart from Donne. It makes him the more confident priest if, perhaps, the less interesting poet.

Several more of Southwell's poems promote this same confidence-building and consoling end. Often these poems will open with the kinds of complaints that Southwell must have heard from his co-religionists. In "I dye without desert," for example, the speaker likens himself to "an orphane Child," and in his "helplesse hart" he hopes that "some tender eares/ Will rue [his] orphane state and feeble teares" (1-6). He assesses the state of affairs in the world around him and observes how the wicked prosper: "For right is wrong'd, and vertue wag'd with blood,/ The badd are blissd, god murdred in the good" (23-24).[112] His prayers are answered when he realizes that "worldly blisse in finall bale doth end" (32). In what seems to be a recusant twist on the parable of the sower, both the speaker and the readers are reminded that "God doth sometymes cropp the sweetest floure,/ And leaves the weede till tyme do it devoure" (35-36). Similar consolation is underscored in "Times goe by turnes." Again, Southwell and his co-religionist can claim

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[112]That the state of affairs for English Catholics continued to worsen during Southwell's ministry to them is evinced in a 1590 letter from the poet to the Jesuit general. He reports that "the condition of Catholic recusants here ... is deplorable and full of fears and dangers; more especially since our adversaries have looked for wars. As many of ours as are in chains, rejoice and are comforted in their prisons; and they that are at liberty, set not their hearts upon it, nor expect it to be of long continuance." As McCoog reports, this letter and its vehemence were a reaction to a false rumor that a second Spanish invasion had landed in Ireland (123-24).

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that time is on their side. The poem opens with echoes of "Decease release": "The lopped tree in time may grow againe" (1). The sense that better days are coming enables the speaker to hope that "no hap so hard, but may in fine amend" (12).[113] In what are perhaps the most poignant lines in this poem, Southwell speaks for and about his fellow Catholics in the face of persecution:

> The saddest birds a season find to sing,
>
> The roughest storme a calme may soone allay.
>
> Thus with succeeding turnes God tempereth all. (15-17)

In summary, then, a fair number of Southwell's poems are deliberately penned with the intention of providing consolation for women and men who suffered the same fears and temptations as their poetry-writing priest, and nowhere is this pastoral intention more obviously, and perhaps more eloquently, stated than in the introduction to his *Epistle of Comfort*:

> For as to the wayfaring pilgrim, wandering in the dark and misty night, every light (though never so little) is comfortable, and to the stranger that travelleth in a land of divers language, any that can (though it be but brokenly) speak his country's tongue, doth not a little rejoice him; so

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[113]Sustaining this sense would have been particularly difficult in the last years of Southwell's work in England. As Elizabeth's pursuivants were closing in on the poet, Parliament was discussing further measures aimed at "reducing disloyal subjects to obedience." Among the harshest of these was a proposal that Catholic children be taken from their parents at age seven and educated in Protestant homes. Elizabeth was advised that "you shall under colour of education, have [the children] as hostages of their parents' fidelities, that have power in England, and by this their number will be quickly lessened" (Hicks, "St. Omers" 158).

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> peradventure in this foggy night of heresy, and the confusion of tongues which it hath procured here in our island, this dim light, which I shall set forth before you, and these my Catholic, though broken, speeches which I shall use unto you, will not be altogether unpleasant. (3-4)

Despite his anxieties about betraying the church and the religious order to which he belonged, when he was finally apprehended, Southwell remained faithful through three years of imprisonment and torture at the hands of Elizabeth's agent, Topcliffe.[114] In many ways, it is remarkable that Southwell avoided arrest for as long as he did. As Caraman describes it, he "led a charmed life," experiencing "two almost miraculous escapes" (*Friendship* 29-30).[115] His luck ran out, however, on June 24, 1592, when he was betrayed by Anne Bellamy, the daughter of Robert Bellamy who had often hosted Jesuits at his home, Uxenden Hall. While herself imprisoned for the faith, Anne was raped by Topcliffe, and ultimately agreed to set a trap for Southwell in order to save herself and her

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[114]Topcliffe is an oddly fascinating character. His position, as Caraman notes, "is difficult to define": "Responsible only to his sovereign, he had his own private gang of thugs who shared with him the spoils of his conquests. He organized raids and directed them in person; he was both grand inquisitor and rack master, possessing a license to torture privately on his own premises. At the trial of priests, he was assistant prosecutor; at the scaffold, assistant director of executions. He boasted that he had the ear of the Queen. Garnet spoke of him as *homo sordidissimus*" (*Friendship* 70).

[115]Garnet describes the first of these escapes in a 1593 letter to Aquaviva: "A traitor had caught sight of our Robert and instead of immediately pouncing on him, he followed him for a long distance in order to track him down to the house for which he was making and there make a bigger haul. But Robert, who likes to walk at a brisk pace, though unaware that he was being shadowed by a spy, suddenly hastened his stride and vanished altogether from the man's sight. Therefore there was no flattering reward for the traitor when he got back to Walsingham but only harsh words instead" (*Friendship* 29-30).

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family. She knew that the Jesuit would soon be visiting her home in order to "give comfort" by means of the sacraments to all there present, and she informed Topcliffe as to the location of the priest's usual hiding place. When the pursuivants arrived at the recusant home, Southwell willingly gave himself up in order to save his hosts. Southwell seems to have been kept at Topcliffe's house for several months until he was transferred to the Tower at the request of his father.[116] Richard Southwell petitioned the Queen "that if his son had committed any crime, for which he deserved death according to the law, he should suffer death; if not that her Majesty be pleased to have him treated as the person he was, being a gentleman, though he were a Jesuit" (Janelle, *Southwell* 68).[117] After two and a half years in the Tower, he was removed to Newgate on February 18, 1595, where he would await trial.

At the end of these years, during which Southwell wrote nothing, he was hanged at Tyburn. It is reported that the Queen herself expressed some regret upon hearing of his

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[116]During these weeks Southwell endured a new form of torture, "more efficient, slow, and merciless than the old-fashioned rack: [Southwell], his feet off the ground, was hung from a rod passed through rings pinned against a wall. In this way the body did the work of pulleys and weights" (Caraman, *Friendship* 71). This treatment left the Jesuit with an enduring injury: "While he was hanging from the wall, he had spewed a great quantity of blood, which led to serious intestinal trouble. When, ... he was removed to Newgate ..., 'he asked the gaoler not to go too far away in case some accident should happen to him or he should be in need of something, because as a result of his bitter tortures he was not strong enough to shout'" (91).

[117]As Caraman reports, the Queen was disposed to grant this petition, despite the fact that Richard Southwell was bankrupt at the time, because of her familiarity with the poet's family: " ... her Jesuit prisoner ... belonged to a family well known to her and could claim cousinship with [Robert Cecil] her chief minister; that he himself was the son of the girl with whom she had been brought up and with whom she had learned the Latin tongue" (*Friendship* 87).

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death. Southwell's earliest biographer, Diego Yepez, reports in his *Historia Particular de le Persecucion de Inglaterra* that a nobleman who visited the poet on the night before his execution "went and told the Queen all that had later passed at the death of the Father, praising him very much, and the rare parts he was gifted with":

> When the Queen had heard him, she replied that they had deceived her with calumnies telling her that the Father had come to the realm to raise sedition; and she showed signs of grief for his death, especially when she saw a book that he had composed in the English tongue on different topics, pious and devout, designed to teach poets how to safeguard their talent and employ it as befitted.[118]

As noted above, Elizabeth was familiar with his family, having spent part of her childhood with the poet's mother, and she obviously seems to have been moved by his efforts to reform poetry. And while there is some evidence that suggests how the death of Southwell affected a good many of his contemporaries, it is most unfortunate that it is not known how John Donne reacted to the news.[119] In the next chapter I will survey the evidence that points in the direction of the two men having known one another. Even if they had

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[118]Caraman speculates that the book in question "would have been either *Saint Peter's Complaint* or, less likely, *Mary Magdalene's Tears*" (113-14).

[119]One such contemporary, Lord Mountjoy, intervened at Southwell's execution, stopping the hangman from cutting Southwell down while still alive. Mountjoy was preventing the poet from being eviscerated before he was dead. Caraman reports on the future viceroy of Ireland's behavior at Tyburn: "And also, when the sheriff, holding up Southwell's head, got no reply to his cry "Traitor" and had shouted, "I see there are some here who have come, not to honor the Queen but to reverence a traitor," it was Mountjoy who spoke for all: "I cannot answer for his religion, but I wish to God that my soul may be with his" (*Friendship* 114).

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never met, however, Donne would surely have been aware of his Jesuit uncles' famous confrere. Just prior to Southwell's trial and execution in 1595, Donne had completed his studies at Lincoln's Inn. He, along with his brother, had begun his professional training in the law three years earlier. In 1593, this same brother, Henry, died in Newgate prison while awaiting trial for harboring a priest, William Harrington. As R.C. Bald surmises, the nature of his brother's death made for "severe tensions" in the young poet's life. Furthermore, Donne may have been tempted to blame the Jesuits for his family's most recent religious troubles. According to his biographer, "if Donne felt that Jesuit intrigue had any part in shaping the circumstances which led to his brother's death, the consequent bitterness could well have hardened into unflinching opposition" (Bald 67). In what follows, I will explore the evolution of Donne's "unflinching opposition" to things Catholic and Jesuit and how that evolution is related to his own project of sacerdotal self-fashioning. It is my hope that some new light may be shed on Donne's own vocational discernment and its attendant anxieties by considering it against the background of Southwell's understanding of himself as a priest who can write piously utilitarian poetry grounded in sacramental confidence.

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4. "Oh, to vex me, contraryes meet in one": Priesthood [Un]Donne

In the years just after Robert Southwell's death, a Catholic contemporary of John Donne's who had opted for exile on the continent tried to imagine the situation of his co-religionists whom he had left behind. He was particularly interested in what might be the mind set of the many who were going over to the established church:

> Set before your eies anyone ther in England, who hath left the Catholic religion, and is become a Protestant, and marke whether he be not as a young calfe let out of his crewe, or as a colt leapt out of his enclosure? How many may you see there amongst yow of such good fellowes, which show plainely that they have, *Conscientiam cauteriatam*, a seared Conscience. (Hill 91)

The symptoms of this "searing" seem to have been as various as the causes for separation from the Roman church which precipitated them. As the historian, David Matthew observed in 1938,

> There was always a proportion among descendants of the wealthier recusant stock who were passing beyond the reach of Catholic influence ... who abandoned the sacraments, while remaining strongly conscious of and troubled by their isolation. (230)

As chapters one and two clearly show, scholars since Matthew's time have shed considerable light on this "troubled" generation of which John Donne was so prominent a member and for which he self-consciously fashioned himself a spokesman. Because of his

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prominence and the role which he assumed as a result of it, Donne was a likelier candidate than most for the kind of "cauterizing" endured by those who rejected the Catholicism of their parents. My contention is that the "searing" which he suffered is particularly acute around the sensitive area of sacerdotal identity. When he faces the possibility of becoming an Anglican priest, Donne shows himself to be "strongly conscious of and troubled by" the religious anxieties that are so characteristic of his age (Matthew 230).

In what follows I hope to document John Donne's anxieties about the validity of his own priestly ordination and show how these anxieties, as expressed in his poetry, are related to the larger issues of sacrifice and sacramentality. I will begin by reading his 1618 poem, "To Mr Tilman After He Had Taken Orders," as a site where such anxieties get encoded. For a variety of reasons, some of which were mentioned in passing at the close of the previous chapter, John Donne, a member of what was arguably the best-connected of Catholic families in England, gradually moved away from the Roman church and ultimately fashioned himself an Anglican priest, taking orders on January 23, 1615. Donne's Papist pedigree is noted by Richard Strier, for example, when he points out that the poet was "descended on his mother's side from the family and the circle of Thomas More" ("Awry and Squint" 357). Moreover, Donne himself claims that, compared with his own, "no family (which is not of farre larger extent and greater branches,) hath endured and suffered more in their persons and fortunes, for obeying the Teachers of the Romane Doctrine" (*Pseudo-Martyr*, "Advisement to the Reader"). Despite these connections, however, Donne chose the Anglican priesthood as a vehicle for establishing what Stephen Greenblatt might call "a sense of personal order, [and] a characteristic mode

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of address to the world" (*Self-Fashioning* 1).

In the midst of his unsettling experience of shifting ecclesiastical structures and sympathies, Donne finally acquiesced to ordination in the Church of England in the hope of finding some solid ground upon which to establish his identity. In this, as in so many of his attempts to fashion himself as a man successful and secure, Donne is acutely aware of the possibility of becoming "un-done" as a result of his doubts about himself and, in this case, his doubts about sacramentality.[120] That the latter were quite considerable just as the poet became a priest has been recognized only recently, and such recognition provides an important new perspective from which his verse can be viewed:

> In Donne's time, the change in religions seemed not merely a superstructure on the economic base, but incomparably the most important social trend affecting people's lives. Rightly or wrongly -- whether resistant or enthusiastic, even if indifferent -- those in the sixteenth century who considered the nature of their time never doubted or disputed that (not the rise of the middle class, but) a general deprivation of the Catholic sacraments was creating in England a new order of social experience.
>
> (Flynn, "Prolusion" 41)

I think it is possible to argue that in the Tilman poem and elsewhere the author of Satire

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[120]This "most famous of the many puns on Donne's name" is admittedly a matter of some dispute. It is possible that the poet made it himself in a "sad letter to his wife" written shortly after he had lost his post with Thomas Egerton. He closed his letter with the subscript, "John Donne, Anne Donne, un-done." Doubts about the authenticity of this anecdote are discussed in Bald (139). Even if Donne himself was not the first to suggest the pun, and the state of mind which it reveals, it is significant that his friends were aware of his predilection for undoing himself.

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III still "stand[s] inquiring right" in matters of religion, particularly in matters of sacramental and sacerdotal validity.[121] Even as he strives to fashion himself as "Embassador to God and destinie" (38), in an effort to compensate for his failure to perform this same diplomatic "function" for his King, Donne seems to doubt whether Tilman's ordination and his own occasioned any "substantial" change. "Thou art the same materials, as before," he writes to Tilman, "Only the stamp is changed; but no more" (13-14).[122]

Scholarship concerning Donne's Tilman poem, while hardly voluminous, has largely focused on fixing the identity of the man to whom the piece is addressed. These

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[121]As W. Milgate admits in his edition of Donne's *Satires, Epigrams, and Verse Letters*, "it is not possible to date [Satire III] very precisely" (139). Based on several historical allusions in the poem, however, Milgate is inclined to believe that Donne wrote it in 1594 or 1595, when the poet had yet to commit himself to one church or another. Donne defends his indecision by claiming that "in a strage way/ To stand inquiring right, is not to stray" (77-78). He also knows that his pursuit of truth will come at considerable cost: "On a huge hill,/ Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will/ Reach her, about must, and about must goe;/ And what th'hill's suddennes resists, winne so;/ Yet strive so, that before age, death's twilight,/ Thy soule rest, for none can worke in that night" (79-84).

[122]Donne's desire to serve in James's diplomatic corps is several times documented in Bald's biography. As late as March 1614, just months before he is ordained, Donne asks Somerset to secure an appointment to Venice. While rejecting Somerset's petition on the poet's behalf, the King counter-offers by suggesting that Donne seek ecclesiastical preferment (See Bald 290-91). If Donne had gone to Venice, it is very possible that he would never have become a priest. According to William Meuller, "it seems very probable that, but for his marriage to Anne, Donne would have become one of England's leading statesman: he had the ability to do so, he was under the expert guidance of one of Queen Elizabeth's favorites, and he coveted a high place in his nation's political life. Had Donne been able to satisfy his secular ambitions, it is unlikely that he would have considered ordination; England would probably have gained a great statesman and lost a great preacher" (13).

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efforts have not been especially successful. For example, after a lengthy investigation, Helen Gardner describes Tilman as "a shadowy figure." Relying on information provided by Bald, Gardner summarizes what we know of him:

> Edward Tilman matriculated from Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in 1609; became B.A. in 1612/13; M.A. in 1616 and B.D. in 1623. He was made a Fellow in 1613, before taking his M.A. His delay in taking orders may well have been on account of his hopes of gaining secular advancement, through academic distinction, such as George Herbert cherished. He was ordained deacon on 20 December 1618 and priest on 12 March 1619/20, and held various cures in East Anglia until his death in 1641/2. (128)

In 1973, some additional information about Tilman was uncovered by Allan Pritchard in the course of his work on the D'ewes papers at the British Museum, but despite his attempt to shed light on their relationship, Pritchard concludes that "neither Tilman's letters nor Simonds D'ewes's testimony provides any answer to the question of whether Donne knew Tilman" (41). According to Pritchard,

> Donne apparently wrote his poem in response to verses in which Tilman expressed his doubts about taking holy orders, and he may have known no more about Tilman than those verses provided. The new information brings Tilman no closer to Donne than the sermon he preached at St. Paul's Cross when Donne was Dean of St. Paul's, several years after he addressed the poem to Tilman. Simonds D'Ewes's evidence that Tilman achieved some prominence at Cambridge by 1618, however, increases the likelihood that

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> Donne had heard something of him when he wrote his poem, and there is a quality in Tilman's letters which might suggest that Donne had some knowledge of his character. (41)

Regardless of whether or not they ever met, it is all but certain that Donne read Tilman's poem in which the young cleric identifies the very specific causes of his pre-ordination anxieties.[123] Gardner suggests that Donne "may have come across [Tilman's] verses accidentally and been struck by the parallel with himself" (129). She admits, however, that "Donne's is a very odd response" to Tilman's work. Gardner rightly notes that "the only reason that Tilman puts forward for not taking orders is personal unworthiness":

> Tell mee my selfe, if in my selfe I know
>
> A power unchangeable: my selfe saies no.
>
> ....
>
> Tell mee my selfe, if in my selfe I know

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[123]In an interesting twist on this biographical information, or lack thereof, Louis Martz uses the fact that Donne never met Tilman to advance his argument that the former was influenced by the Ignatian *Exercises.* Martz would have us believe that in writing a letter about vocational discernment to a man whom he did not know, Donne is employing the Jesuit method for "making a sound and good election." Martz cites the following passage from the *Exercises* as away of illuminating Donne's purpose: "The ... rule is to place before my eyes a man whom I have never seen or known, and to consider what I, desiring all perfection for him, would tell him to do and choose for the greater glory of God and the perfection of his soul; and acting so, to keep the rule which I lay down for another" [220]. While I do not doubt Donne's familiarity with Ignatius's approach to prayer, it seems a bit of a stretch to infer that they have so much in common in terms of their perspectives on priesthood. As will become obvious, Donne's response to Tilman has more to do with the power, privilege and prestige attached to clerical status than it does with the perfection of the soul. For Donne, it is the greater glory of the preacher, "not the greater glory of God," that seems to be at stake.

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Concupiscence asswag'd: my selfe saies no.

....

Tell mee my selfe, if in my selfe I know

A spirit so mild and soft: my selfe saies no.

....

Tell me my selfe, if in my selfe I know

Supple Humility: my selfe saies no.

....

Now judge my selfe, if in my selfe I know

Fitnes for sacred calling: God knows no.

Donne seems to disregard Tilman's argument, and in responding to it "makes no reference to all the various accusations Tilman brings against himself." Instead, Donne "congratulates Tilman for triumphing over 'Lay-scornings of the Ministry' and recurs to the same topic later with a reference to 'Gentry' thinking it beneath their dignity to take orders" (Gardner 129):

Thou whose diviner soul has caus'd thee now

To put thy hand to the holy Plough,

Making Lay-scornings of the Ministry

Not an impediment, but victory;

....

But if thy gainings do surmount expression,

Why doth the foolish world scorn that profession,

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> Whose joyes pass speech? Why do they think unfit
>
> That Gentry should joyne families with it? (1-4, 25-28)

In an effort to defend Donne's integrity, Gardner takes pains to document the existence of and reasons for the kind of "Lay-scornings of the Ministry" to which the poet refers. Even though Tilman never mentions such an attitude on the gentry's part in his poem, Gardner applauds Donne's courage in the face of "the general ignominy which is cast upon the profession of the clergyman." To this end she cites various seventeenth-century sources which seem to corroborate Donne's description of popular attitudes toward the clerical state. She notes that Richard Bernard in *The Faithful Shepheard* speaks of ministry as

> an office more meet for the mightiest person of the best education and noblest birth, than for the basest of people and lowest sort, upon whom for the most part it is cast; because the wise men of the world, men of might, and the noble, hold it derogatorie to their dignities. (130)

Similarly, she cites an anecdote from Walton's *Life of Herbert* which illustrates the same attitude:

> He did at his return to London, acquaint a Court-friend with his resolution to enter Sacred Orders, who persuaded him to alter it, as too mean an employment, and too much below his birth, and the excellent abilities and endowments of his mind. To whom he replied, "It hath been formerly judged that the Domestick Servants of the King of Heaven, should be of the noblest families on earth: and, though the Iniquity of the late times have

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> made clergy-men meanly valued, and the sacred name of priest contemptible; yet I will labor to make it honorable, by consecrating all my learning, and all my poor abilities, to advance the glory of God that gave them. (130)

On the basis of these citations and other evidence available to her in 1952, Gardner takes up for Donne in concluding that "in comparison with other professions, the ministry was ... most unattractive" (131).[124] She implies that even if Tilman was oblivious to "Lay-scornings" of his newly assumed position, Donne is justified in making so much of them. It is to his credit and Tilman's, so Gardner would have us think, that they would offer themselves for service in the church at a time when such labor was held in very low esteem. At the end of her reading of "To Mr Tilman," Gardner argues that Donne is to be "honored":

> In this poem to Tilman he writes in a high other-worldly strain, to glorify the priest's calling, which the foolish world "disrespects." There is an accent of warm sincerity in these lines, as in all Donne's references to his late-adopted profession. (132)

Despite Gardner's efforts to lionize Donne for his pastoral selflessness, his allegedly "warm" sacerdotal sincerity seems a bit cooler in light of evidence revealed by recent scholarly reports on the status of the Anglican clergy in the early years of the

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[124]Gardner's argument is weakened by the fact that in making her point she relies heavily on works dating from the end of the seventeenth century, e.g. John Eachard's 1670 *The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy* and Barnabas Oley's 1671 preface to the second edition of Herbert's *A Priest to the Temple*.

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seventeenth century. The "scornings" which Donne decries in "To Mr Tilman" have, I think, more to do with his own lingering doubts about the validity of Anglican orders than they do with the tenor of public opinion. While church historians admit that "Lay-scornings of the ministry" have a long tradition in England, it is the case that such scorn and the reasons which prompted it were on the wane by the time of Donne's ordination. Donne's ancestor, Thomas More, was among the most vociferous "lay-scorners of the ministry" in Tudor England, describing the clergy as "a horde of miserably poor, superstitious illiterates." But in response to attacks such as More's, "clerical standards and achievements were ... rising slowly but steadily" throughout the reigns of Henry VIII and his successors (Aveling 61-63). According to J.C.H. Aveling, it was during Donne's lifetime that this rise reached its peak: "the medieval clerical set-up was fast dying, and a new image of the highly professional clergy was established"(86-87). Aveling argues that "by 1600 the Church of England was apparently well-advanced along the road to a pastorate composed in the main of comfortably-off minor gentry or bourgeois men." Obviously, assertions such as this call into question Gardner's contention that "Donne belonged, by his associations, if not by his birth, to a class which did not normally think of taking orders" (131).[125]

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[125]It is notable that the same upward mobility that was increasingly characteristic of the Anglican clergy was also true of their Roman counterparts. Aveling points to Southwell's insistance that the seminary priests were mainly gentry, and he recalls Henry Garnet's defensive remark that "no Jesuit missioner ever had more than two servants" (87). Interestingly enough, Southwell, in his *Humble Supplication,* answers charges against Jesuits and Seminary priests on account of the alleged "baseness of their birth." He defends Allen, Parsons, and others by underscoring their social status: "Yet this without disparagement may be truly avowed, that the Cardinal's grace is of as good and ancient house, and every way as worshipfully allied, as some of the highest Counselors were in

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Contrary to what Donne and Gardner would have us believe, it is possible to argue that "more than any other age except perhaps the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the seventeenth century saw the English clergy at the peak of their influence over society and intellectual life" (Aveling 117). As Rosemary O'Day argues in *The English Clergy: the Emergence and Consolidation of a Profession, 1558-1642*, much of this new-found clerical influence was owing to the fact that an increasing number of those in orders benefited from a university education which "broadened the horizons and heightened the ambitions of the clergy" (5). O'Day's research shows that university graduates entered the ministry because it was "a popular profession in the early seventeenth century" (230). Because greater numbers of well-educated young men were applying for ordination, bishops became much more discriminating in accepting candidates. This was particularly true for large urban dioceses such as Donne's own London. Even if theirs was not a "wealthy profession," O'Day points out that "their position in society was important." Bonds among the clergy were strengthened as the group became more homogeneous in terms of education, and "where the clergy did have relationships outside their professional

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their meaner fortunes, till your Majesty's favour and their rare abilities made them steps to climb to their present honors.... As for Father Parsons, he ... will easily acknowledge his birth to have been of more honest than great parents; yet they were not so mean but that they were able to afford him such education, as (if he had not raised his thoughts above all earthly dignities) might have made his good parts a way to no small preferment.... As for other Priests, how many of them are Knights' and Esquires' sons, and otherwise allied both to worshipful and noble houses, and heirs to fair revenues, let their own friends and parents dispersed throughout the whole realm bear witness! This only may we may say in answer to our objected baseness; that in the small number of the Catholic Priests of our Nation, (which reacheth not to one tenth of the Protestant Ministry) there are very near as many, yea happily more gentlemen, than in all of the other clergy of the whole Realm" (6-7)

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group, they tended to mix with other professionals or with the educated gentry" (161).

O'Day eventually admits that even as Anglican clergymen were becoming increasingly aware of their "separate, special, and important vocation," some "groups of laymen were questioning the very *raison d'etre* of [their] ministry" (190). If this questioning amounts to something akin to Donne's "Lay-scornings," however, then it is important to note that it was motivated by theological rather than social prejudices. Members of dissenting sects, on the one hand, attacked the clergy of the established church "for all those attributes which set them apart," including clerical dress, their monopoly on preaching, and "their position as watchdogs of the establishment" (O'Day 190-91). Recusants, on the other hand, undermined their authority by taking positions on the opposite end of the theological spectrum. They questioned the very validity of Anglican orders. If it is at all true that the conforming clergy were unpopular with certain factions in seventeenth-century England, then that unpopularity had to do with disputes about the doctrine of the ministry. Clergymen of Donne's stripe found themselves in the uncomfortable position of advocating the Jacobean *via media* between what they perceived to be the equally extreme positions espoused by Puritans and Roman Catholics. The poet himself, for example, was acutely aware of his position as a man in the middle. He frequently fashions himself as standing midway between the Puritans and the Jesuits, the group with whom, despite his family ties, he associates the worst of Catholic excesses. As Timothy Healy points out in his Introduction to *Ignatius His Conclave*,

> [Donne] saw the whole world of the counter-reformation as a new thing, an innovation, ... [and] in England this new thing was identified with the

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> Jesuits. Later in his life he was to feel the same way about the Puritans. Even in 1611 he could link the two together -- the extreme right and the extreme left of the religious spectrum. And he rejected them both for the same reason: they were extremes. (xl-xli)

There is certainly good reason for assuming that Donne was well aware of Catholic "scorn" for Anglican orders and that this scorn would make him anxious even after he had left the Roman church. As previously noted, his Catholic connections were very strong. Interestingly enough, however, these connections have until recently been largely overlooked by scholars. This is the case despite the fact that as early as 1920, Louise Imogen Guiney, writing in *The Month,* argued that "someone, first in the field, should write a little book, which should be a scientific and authentic study of Dr. John Donne as a Catholic" (12). She does not mean to imply that Donne remained some sort of crypto-Catholic even while serving with great distinction in the Church of England. She acknowledges the authenticity of his apostasy, but wants to make a case for the lasting influence of his family's faith: "Donne's Catholicism, as a creed and a code of action, can have gone not very far beyond his majority; but as an influence, it wrought upon him to the end of his life of fifty-eight years" (12). Guiney was swimming against the tide of traditional Donne scholarship, however, which, taking its cue from Walton's *Life*, has paid "scant attention to Donne's Catholicism, tending rather to see his life as a paradoxical development from libertine scepticism to Protestant fideism" (Flynn, "Donne's Catholicism I," 1).

Walton did his best to establish the Dean of St. Paul's as "a second St. Augustine,"

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and an authentically Anglican one at that, who was converted mid-way through life in order to assume leadership in a church that was under siege (41).[126] In doing so, the famous biographer "deliberately obscured [Donne's] life-long involvement in the painful religious dilemma forced on him and his countrymen by the public events of their time" (Flynn I, 1). Walton writes out Donne's Roman roots, for example, by never alluding to the fact that both his father, John Donne, Sr., and his step-father, the physician John Syminges, were Catholics; and in documenting the poet's growth in "wisdom, age, and grace," he does his best to imply that despite his mother's best efforts, "Donne had never really been a Catholic, and the influence of Catholicism disappeared from his life for good during his twentieth year" (Flynn I, 3).

After a begrudging admission that Donne was subjected to Catholic influences in his youth, Walton makes it clear that by the time the poet reached his majority he could clearly recognize the errors inherent in his former ways: "Indeed, truth had too much light about her to be hid from so sharp an Inquirer; and, he had too much ingenuity, not to acknowledge he had found her" (16-17). As Flynn observes, such a sentiment "reveals less about Donne than it does about Walton":

> Walton, like most Englishmen born after the 1580's, distrusted Catholics and Catholicism.... Walton and his generation had never experienced anything like the spiritual dilemma that had faced three preceding generations, born into a still largely Catholic England.... The way [he]

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[126]In doing so, Walton was elaborating on a distinction made by Donne himself in a letter to Henry Goodyer. The poet points out the difference between "mad Jack Donne" and "D. Donne, the Dean of St. Paul's" (Gosse 2, 124).

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> speaks of Donne's cool evaluation and choice of a religion shows again that he was not sensitive to the gravity of this dilemma for a man like Donne. There is something faintly condescending and almost modern about his phrasing ... evincing, perhaps, some know-nothingism about so archaic and one-sided a controversy. (I, 3)

Regarding Donne's mother, it is interesting that in pointing out the parallels between the poet and St. Augustine, Walton never extends the analogy by describing Elizabeth Donne as a second St. Monica. To the contrary, he, and Bald after him, want to minimize her role in the poet's life. Bald, for example, points out that the departure of Donne's mother and step-father for Antwerp in 1595 "removed Donne from the last vestiges of parental control" (115). In regard to Walton and other biographers such as Bald who read Donne's life from Walton's Protestant perspective, Flynn rightly observes that "to understand the stages which an Englishman like Donne went through in his religious development, we need to look back at the man himself rather than accept the blurred image from the mind of one who had lived through the Puritan revolution" (I, 3).

Though, as Bald informs us, "it remains a matter for speculation whether [John] was related to any of the Donne's who suffered for the old faith," we know for sure that the poet was conscious of the fact that his mother was related to the Mores, "each successive generation of [whom] for two and a half centuries supplied the Roman church with devout servants who suffered civil disabilities or exile for their religion" (23).[127]

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[127]Following Flynn, I am using information provided by Bald, but it is important to note that in regard to Donne's religious development, particularly in the years leading up to his ordination, Bald "has left us a picture essentially inspired by the one Walton

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Donne knew, for instance, that among the direct descendants of Thomas More who were his contemporaries, "at least eight - four men and four women - were members of Roman Catholic religious orders," and the historical record shows that he knew his mother's brothers, Ellis and Jasper Heywood, who were previously mentioned as prominent members of the Jesuit mission to England.[128] Little is known about Donne's childhood, but even Bald finds warrant for speculating that "he must have been aware of what was going on around him":

> The sense of being apart from others in his family's fidelity to the old religion brought along with it, on the one hand, a feeling of almost aristocratic aloofness as well as a specific sense of pride.... On the other hand, there was around him a constant sense of watchfulness, of whispered conversation and innuendo, of disguises and secret comings and goings. (41)

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sketched three hundred years ago." According to Flynn, "Bald has seen the modern biographer's role as that of a modifier, here and there assembling new scraps and areas of relevant information to correct or fill out Walton's pattern." In terms of such corrections, Flynn is right in pointing out how Bald replaces Walton's understanding of the "unifying principle" in the poet's life with a notion of his own. Walton's "Anglican hagiography" puts forth Protestantism as "the guiding principle in Donne's life." Bald, on the other hand, substitutes "a sobering struggle for advancement" (I, 2).

[128]Bald notes that there was a strong affinity between the Mores and the Heywoods: "the members of the group felt bound together by a sense of solidarity; they were united not only by their fidelity to the old religion ... but also by their common kinship, and, above all, their reverence for the memory of Sir Thomas More." As evidence of this reverence, Bald recalls an anecdote about the Heywood brothers: "It was also credibly reported that two of John Heywood's sons, Jasper and Ellis, having one of the teeth of Thomas More between them, and either of them being desirous to have it himself, it suddenly, to the admiration of both, parted in two" (25).

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With what seems to be a characteristic flair for the dramatic, another of Donne's biographers, John Carey, writes that "Donne was born into a terror, and formed by it." As a result of his Roman roots,

> [Donne] survived on the fringes of society, a master of back stairs and side alleys, hard up, outcast.... Because of his family's connections, Donne was dragged into the very center of the storm and was forced to watch its bloody course with the closest attention. (5)

In this regard, Carey tries to show, for example, how it is likely that Donne would have visited his Jesuit uncle, Jasper, in the Tower and that he was witness to the gruesome executions of Catholic martyrs (5-6):

> The victims were among the most gifted and intrepid of England's youth: young men like Edmund Campion, executed in 1581, who had been sent to the Catholic colleges abroad for their education, and who returned on their suicidal missions, joyfully embracing martyrdom to save their motherland from Anti-Christ. We know that Donne attended such executions. He records [in *Pseudo-Martyr*] that he has seen Catholic bystanders, oblivious of their own danger, praying to the priest's mangled body, in hope that the new martyr would take their petitions to heaven with him.

In this atmosphere of violence, suspicion, and anxiety, Donne was instructed by tutors who were undoubtedly Catholic. Whether these tutors were Jesuits or seminary priests is not exactly clear, though Bald contends that it would have been unlikely for the tutors to have been members of the Society because there were so few of them in England

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during Donne's youth and what few there were had official instructions to "associate themselves as much as possible with men of high rank, and to avoid familiar conversations with women and boys" (40). Even in his choice of an Oxford college in 1584, Donne was influenced by his family's Catholicism. As William Mueller reports in *John Donne, Preacher*, he entered Hart Hall, "then a refuge for those of Roman Catholic persuasions" (10). Likewise, in *John Donne and the New Philosophy*, Charles M. Coffin argues that

> Residence at Hart Hall in the late sixteenth century meant for Donne little more than an extension of his early training. In addition to the Roman Catholic atmosphere enveloping this particular bit of Oxford, there must be taken into consideration a curriculum of study hardly less medieval than any that could have been devised by his previous tutors. (29)

That Coffin seems to equate a Catholic "atmosphere," much less a Jesuit education, with "a medieval curriculum" is unfortunate and evinces the limits of his knowledge about the church and the Society of Jesus in the late sixteenth century. In any event, that Donne was considerably more familiar than Coffin with the Society's spirituality and sense of self-understanding is clear enough. As Timothy Healy points out,

> One fact is evident, Donne knows more (and that in greater detail) about the Jesuits than most controversialists.... He is familiar with the rules of the Society, major ones such as the exclusion of any apostolate directed primarily to women and such a minor one as the instruction for the proper keeping of table silver. He knows legislative decisions, such as Ignatius's prohibition against attacks on the Sorbonne and the Parliament of Paris and

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> the fact that the rules themselves are liable to change by proper authority. (xxxvii)[129]

Ultimately, in his preface to *Pseudo-Martyr* (1610), Donne would reflect back on the lasting influence of his Jesuit and Catholic education when describing his eventual acceptance of the Anglican creed:

> I had a longer work to doe than many other men; for I was first to blot out, certaine impressions of the Romane religion, and to wrastle both against the examples and against the reasons, by which some hold was taken; and some anticipations early layde upon my conscience, both by Persons who by nature had a power and superiority ouer my will, and others who by their learning and good life, seem'd to me iustly to claim an interest for the guiding and rectifying of mine understanding in these matters. (*Pseudo-Martyr*, "A Preface to Priests and Jesuits")

When ultimately forced to choose between his ancestral faith and Anglicanism, Donne could afford to be neither rash nor sudden; too much of his identity was mixed up in his family's Catholicism, and this recently recognized cause for complexity in efforts to understand the poet cannot be underscored enough:

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[129]Healy also observes how Donne deals fairly, if not respectfully, in writing about Ignatius himself. The real target of the poet's 1610 satire, Healy claims, is not the Saint but the Society he founded. To this end, Donne spares Ignatius for the most part: "This is demonstrated by the restrained use Donne makes of biographical information that was surely known to him. Comments are made on the Saint's ignorance, his early career as a soldier, the wound which ended it, and his troubles at Paris. But there are other stories from Ignatius' life which would have annoyed Donne, ... [and] none of this is mentioned. It is possible to see here an element of fair play for a man whom Donne, when he was a child, must have been taught to admire" (xxxvi).

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> The problem of Donne's lineage for Donne studies is then to appreciate the fact that, as a member of a group directly afflicted by enormous and penetrating social developments, Donne wrote out of an experience that his contemporaries *could* not ignore, that therefore never ceased to dominate *his* outlook, and that may appear as an element in anything he wrote. We should no more separate the study of Donne's life and writings from his and his family's religious persecution and exile than we would separate the study of the writings of Solzhenitsyn or Wiesel from theirs. (Flynn, "Prolusion" 34)

Donne set out to read his way through the ever-increasing amount of theological material produced on both sides of the Reformation divide. His conversion was a slow, studious process, set against the background of his brother's death in Newgate prison in 1593.[130] While Donne was reading his way into the Anglican Church, his brother was paying the price for having taken up the family business of Catholic intrigue. As mentioned above, he was arrested for harboring a priest in his rooms at Lincoln's Inn and died of the

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[130]That Donne was still suspected of being a Catholic during his tenure at the Inns of Court is suggested by Bald when he tries to explain how the poet came to meet Anthony Rudd, the Dean of Gloucester: "The Dean of Gloucester, to whom Donne showed his annotated copy of Bellarmine's writings, ... was Anthony Rudd. How Donne came into contact with him can only be surmised, but it is very probable that Donne's religious opinions had been the subject of some scrutiny, perhaps because of his kinship to his recently arrested brother. It was the practice at the time to refer recusants ... to some theologian of distinction who would then hold a series of conferences with them on matters of faith and doctrine. It is significant of Rudd's interest in the conversion of Catholics that about this time the Privy Council committed to his care Margaret, the daughter of Sir Thomas Throckmorton, who had 'by the perswasion of her mother ... become a verie obstinate Recusant.' Donne was probably sent to Rudd in very much the same way" (69-70).

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plague while awaiting trial.[131] According to Carey, Henry's death "brought [John] not only grief but peril" (10).[132] "Because of his kinship with Henry," Carey writes, "his own religious activities were now likely to attract scrutiny." Donne's options were clear enough:

> If he remained true to his Faith, his chances of preferment and success in the world would be curtailed.... If, on the other hand, he became an apostate, the result confidently predicted by the Church was so hideous that most people have, since Donne's day, simply refused to believe in it any more. But for his generation, eternal damnation was no myth. (11)[133]

Faced with this dilemma, Donne will later report that he "suruayed and digested the whole body of Diuinity, controuerted between ours and the Romane Church" (*Pseudo-Martyr* I). According to Isaac Walton, this survey involved an extensive study of the

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[131]As Flynn notes, the fullest account of these events seems to be over one hundred years old. See John Morris, "The Martyrdom of William Harrington," *The Month* 20 (1874): 411-23.

[132]On the peril inherent in Donne's position, William Mueller observes that "he was born in a time when the course of a man's life -- and his proximity to death -- could be crucially shaped by his religious convictions" (8). In addition to danger, however, Henry's death also brought John a considerable fortune: "As a result of his brother's death, he received a larger portion of his father's estate than he otherwise would have done, about L750 in all. He could now afford a boy to act as page in his rooms, and a measure of financial independence encouraged distractions from his law studies" (Parker 22). Henry's death may have forced Donne to make up his mind in matters of religion, but it also afforded him the luxury of studying those matters at length and in leisure.

[133]As further evidence that Walton wants to minimize Donne's Catholic connections, it should be noted that he ignores the arrest, imprisonment, and death of Henry Donne in his biography of the poet.

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controversial works of the Jesuit Cardinal, Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621).[134] In his *Life*, Walton reports that while Donne was at the Inns of Court,

> he, being then unresolved what religion to adhere to, ... did therefore ... to rectify all scruples ... presently lay aside all study of the Law; and, of all other sciences that might give him a denomination; and begun seriously to survey and consider the body of Divinity.... Being to undertake this search, he believed the Cardinal Bellarmine to be the best defender of the Roman cause, and therefore betook himself to the examination of his reasons.[135]

Bellarmine's work, *Disputationes de controversiis Christianae Fidei, adversus huius temporis haereticos*, was becoming available in England just as Donne began to explore theological questions. The Cardinal's best-known biographer, James Brodrick, notes that "it is quite certain that Bellarmine's volumes became diffused in England with extraordinary rapidity." As evidence Brodrick cites an earlier biography which, "after alluding to the success of the *Disputationes* in England, [says] that 'Queen Elizabeth could find no other remedy for the evil except by prohibiting the study of Bellarmine under penalty of death to all who were not doctors of theology, and there was the same punishment for those discovered in possession of his volumes'" (144-45). Donne,

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[134]As Flynn observes, Donne's annotated volumes of Bellarmine "would go far toward explaining exactly what was happening to Donne's religion at Lincoln's Inn" (I, 7). Unfortunately, they are not extant, and "without them we can only speculate about Donne's specific opinions at this time."

[135]Bald rightly points out that Walton is not always the most reliable of sources, but in this instance he is convinced that "there can be no doubt of the thoroughness with which Donne had studied Bellarmine's *Disputationes*." As evidence, Bald cites references to the Cardinal in Donne's sermons (68-69).

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therefore, may well have been risking his life in reading Bellarmine.

Bald describes the *Disputationes* as "based on Bellarmine's lectures in controversial theology in the recently founded Gregorian University in Rome." These lectures were "specifically addressed to students for the priesthood who were expected to return to the Protestant countries from which they had come, where they would have to face the full force of Protestant argument against the doctrines and practices of the Roman Church" (18). As Osborne points out, Bellarmine's influence on Catholic and Protestant thought can hardly be overestimated, and his *Disputationes* "became the model for presenting the Catholic view of priesthood for the next three hundred years" (282). While Bellarmine's sacerdotal model defends the Decrees of the Council of Trent, he is also noted for the manner in which he sought to meet the objections of reformers on their own grounds. He takes pains to argue not only from tradition but from scripture as well. It is abundantly clear that he was familiar with the writings of Luther and Calvin, and in his articulation of the nature of the priesthood he responds to them point by point.

Bellarmine was especially attentive to his English pupils who included Southwell, Garnet, and other Jesuits whom Donne himself likely knew. That Donne had read Southwell's works, in particular, is clear from his references to the latter's *Humble Supplication* in *Pseudo-Martyr*.[136] Moreover, Bald notes that "even without this evidence,

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[136]The citation occurs in the third chapter of *Pseudo-Martyr*. Donne reports on a meeting which he claims to have witnessed in the Tower during which Southwell's *Humble Supplication* appears to have been discussed: "For so at a consultation of the Jesuites in the Tower in the late Queenes time, I saw it resolued, that in a Petition to bee exhibited to her, shee might not be stiled Sacred. Though one of their owne Order haue obserued that attribute to bee so cheape, that it was usual to say, *Sanct Patres conscripti*, and *Sacramentissimi Quirites*, and *Sanctissimi Milites*. And our English Jesuits use to

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it is quite possible that Donne, a brilliant young layman with Catholic antecedents should have met Southwell and felt his influence."[137] In fact, Bald argues that "it is more than likely" that it was through personal contact with Southwell, who might have served the poet as one of his "tutors and Spiritual advisers," that Donne first heard about Bellarmine (68-69).[138] That the Cardinal cared deeply about the future of the church in England is

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aggrauate her defection much, by that circumstance, that shee had been Consecrated, and pontifically Anonynted, and inuested at her Coronation, and therefore was Sacred" (See *Humble Supplication*, Appendix III, 70).

[137]Even scholars who want to argue for Donne's Anglicanism, such as David Chanoff, admit that the poet was significantly influenced by members of the Society and their practices. Chanoff observes, for example, how the frequency and nature of Donne's letters to friends "parallel the Jesuit letter writers" (155). Donne specifically mentions the Society's epistolary habits in a letter to Goodyer: "If you were here, you would not think me importune, if I bid you goodmorrow every day; And such a patience will excuse my often letters. No other kind of conveyance is better for knowledge or love: What treasures of moral knowledge in Seneca's letters to onely one Lucilius? And what of Natural in Plinies? How much of the story of time is in Ciceroes letters? And how of all these times, in the Jesuites Eastern and Western epistles?" In an interesting twist on Donne's Jesuit connections, Chanoff argues that the poet's situation during the years preceding his ordination resembled that of members of the Society: "That Donne knew of the Jesuits' use of letters is probable; that he knew of the letters themselves is definite. In a way, his own situation resembled that of the scattered priests. Like them he was separated from the common public worship and was in need of the spiritual sustenance that only association with some sort of sympathetic community could provide. In this context, letter-writing takes on a perceptible sacramental tinge. It serves to affirm a spiritual bond among individuals who are deprived of the more normal channels of expression" (156). Chanoff rightly observes that the Jesuits' understanding of the purpose of letter writing comes out of Part VII of the *Constitutions* in which Ignatius recommends the practice as a means of preserving unity among members who are "so scattered among the faithful and among unbelievers in diverse regions of the world."

[138]As I argued in the previous chapter, Southwell was at odds with many of his brother Jesuits in advocating a moderate position regarding the possibility of Catholic loyalty to the Protestant Queen, a stance with which Donne would have been sympathetic. It may be ironic, then, given Bellarmine's theories on justifiable regicide, that it was Southwell who introduced Donne to the Cardinal's work.

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revealed in a letter which he wrote to James Stuart just prior to his accession to the throne in 1603. In that letter, in which he reminds James of his Catholic roots, Bellarmine makes mention of an issue which was particularly important to him: priestly ordination. He warns the King about the dangers of listening to invalidly ordained Protestant ministers, arguing that "no Church can even pretend to an uninterrupted succession of priests from the very See of Peter to the present Episcopate, except the Roman Church" (Brodrick II 147).

Bellarmine's notion of the sacrament of orders, with which Donne was forced to "wrastle," reflects a Tridentine emphasis on priesthood. Bellarmine was heir to the intellectual tradition of the Jesuits who attended the Council in the 1550's, where they were largely responsible for working out a rejoinder to the charges which reformers had leveled at the Catholic understanding of orders. Not surprisingly, the Tridentine position on orders is inherently related to the issues of soteriology and the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist.[139] As noted in Chapter Two, reformers were suspicious of any notion of the priesthood which included the power to offer "the sacrifice of the Mass." Offering such a sacrifice raised two issues for Protestants: first, the sufficiency of Jesus's own act of expiation on the cross; and secondly, the relationship between faith and good works. These very issues were to preoccupy Donne during the years of his vocational discernment.

Contrary to several biographers, including Bald, Donne's willingness to "wrastle"

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[139]As Osborne points out, and as I hope to have shown in chapters two and three, "when one begins to study the sacrament of order in the [Reformation era], one must never begin simply with the deliberation on order. One must take into account all that had preceded these discussions, particularly in the matter of sacraments and justification" (250).

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with the rather dense theological writings of the Jesuit Cardinal on the interrelated issues of sacrifice and sacerdotal identity, even at the risk of losing his life, seems to evince something quite other than a growing scepticism about religion on the poet's part. Bald would have us believe that

> [Donne's] restless intellectual curiosity refuses to allow him to accept any creed unquestioned, and it eventually drove him to a systematic examination of the issues at stake between the conflicting faiths. His investigation brought him perilously close to complete cynicism in matters of religion, for he was not unreceptive to that Renaissance spirit of scepticism and free-thought which to many serious minds was more dangerous and deadly than heresy. (63)[140]

This "romantic conclusion" is, as Flynn contends, "without factual support, ... and it only tends to perpetuate the sense of obscurity and paradox about Donne's religion that has prevailed since Donne himself began to contrast mad Jack Donne with the Dean of St. Paul's" (I, 7). Together with the fact that Donne had recently spent several years traveling through the Catholic countries of Europe making contact with religious exiles, his careful study of Bellarmine seems to suggest that he was genuinely engaged by religious issues and subject not to cynicism but to a significant degree of uncertainty.[141] And there is every

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[140]Bald's construction of Donne as a free-thinker is shared by a good many academics who may be trying to recast a reformation-era poet in their own mold. See Gosse I, 27 and Robert S. Jackson's "'Doubt Wisely': John Donne's Christian Scepticism," *Cithara* 8 (1968) 39-46.

[141]Donne's travels during the years 1589-91 remain a bit of a mystery to his biographers. While Walton and those of like mind would argue that the trip was after the

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reason to suspect that this uncertain engagement continued during the years between his brother's death in 1593 and Donne's ordination 1615.

Even Bald will admit that as late as 1601 Donne "had by no means cut himself off from his Catholic connections" (116). In the spring of that year, the poet, while still in the employ of the Lord Keeper, Thomas Egerton, successfully stood for Parliament.[142] In many respects, this achievement was Donne's last and most significant step in the pursuit of secular advancement, but even this accomplishment was marred by his inability to untangle himself from the web of Catholic connections of which he was a part. As Flynn reports, he "participated in a scheme to sequester from government confiscation and sale

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fashion of a traditional Grand Tour by a young English gentleman, it is important to consider Flynn's argument to the contrary: "Whether the English government would have granted a licence for such travels is doubtful, especially considering ... Donne's Catholic background. In the aftermath of the Armada, the government required all travelers, except known merchants, to obtain a licence from a magistrate, and travel to hostile powers such as Spain was forbidden in any case. Donne's travels to the spiritual and temporal centers of Catholicism in Italy and Spain were almost certainly illicit ... [and], as Bald points out, 'If Donne went to Spain at this period he could only have gone as a Catholic refugee'." As Flynn concludes, "in view of the tense climate of religious conflict during these years, it is unlikely that Donne's travels can have been unrelated to his Catholicism" (I, 5).

[142]Flynn notes how Donne's relationship with Egerton further complicates the poet's relationship with Catholicism. "Like Donne," according to Flynn, "Egerton had been a Catholic until his last days at Lincoln's Inn and even after, though he eventually ended his recusancy.... By June 1581, he must have conformed ... for, having established himself in the Courts as a lawyer of high competence, he was appointed Solicitor-General. Within four months, as if to test his Oath, he was charged with the examination of Edmund Campion, and at Campion's subsequent trial, Egerton took part in the prosecution for treason. Through the 1580's he was repeatedly occupied with the examination and prosecution of Catholics, including Mary Stuart and [Southwell's friend] Philip Howard, Earl of Arundel. Thus in 1597, Donne came to work for a man who like himself had wavered and wrestled with the religious dilemma of the nation, but one who at length decided not only to conform but to seek high position within the Establishment.... In Egerton [Donne] found a patron who would look with understanding and favor on his change of religion" (I, 11).

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the lands of a stubborn recusant" (I, 8). The recusant in question was his relative, John Heywood. Even though his mother had fled to the continent six years earlier, Donne's career was still complicated by his Roman relatives who would call on him to exercise responsibility on behalf of the family. That these complications were the source of suspicions which continued to cling to the poet becomes clear when he had to defend himself in the wake of his marriage to Ann More in December 1601. It seems that part of his father-in-law's rage was aroused by Donne's reputation for indecision in matters of religion:

> The contrite letters which Donne wrote to More ... from prison following the wedding suggest that an important part of Donne's attitude toward [More] was expressed through his self-consciousness about Catholicism. In his letters to More, while he repeatedly refers to rumors about his religion and to "ill reports which malice hath raised of me," he gives More repeated assurances of his rectified faith. These are his earliest denials of Catholicism as far as we know.... In [a] letter to More he asserts that "that fault which was layd to me of ... loving a corrupt religion are vanished and smoakd away (as I assure myself, owt of theyr weaknes they are)." (Flynn I, 12).

In the period between his marriage and his ordination, Donne's religious anxieties seem hardly to have abated, though this reading of the poet's middle years is not the usual one. Again, following Walton's lead, scholars have long thought that this was a rather unproductive time in the Donne's literary career. Most biographers believed that he waited

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until after his ordination to work on the Holy Sonnets. Oddly enough, even when Helen Gardner set the record straight in 1952, proving that these religious poems were mainly written between 1607 and 1610, she minimizes Donne's lingering association with things Catholic.[143] Except for admitting that Donne was influenced by Catholic forms of meditation, she wants to make the poet of the Holy Sonnets seem a thorough-going Protestant:

> There is no need to feel surprise that Donne, at a time when he was engaged in bitter controversy with the Jesuits, should be drawing on Jesuit spirituality in his poetry, and presumably had continued to use a Jesuit form of prayer. He would be making a distinction here which Protestants made without difficulty -- taking the corn and leaving the chaff. (liv-lv)

I want to contend that the winnowing process was not so simple in Donne's case. The poems he wrote during this period take up some of the same issues which circulated and surfaced in Southwell's verse, though Donne seems to share very little of the Jesuit's confidence. While seriously contemplating a career in the established church, Donne is at the same time questioning the kind of agency which the Anglican ministry might afford him. In the Holy Sonnets Donne is aware of and uncomfortable with the limitations inherent in the ecclesiastical construct which he is struggling to embrace. His sense of these limitations is occasioned by an acute awareness of the possibilities that are part of

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[143]According to Gardner, much of Donne's religious poetry was written while he was living at Mitcham. She dates "La Corona" as early as 1607, "A Litanie" in 1608, the six sonnets on eschatological themes in 1609, and ten others before the composition of "The First Anniversary" in 1612. See Gardner xxi-lv.

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the Catholic sacramental system which was so much a part of his past. His contemplations, then, afforded him little in the way of consolation. Around the time that he was writing the Holy Sonnets, Donne's religious situation was further complicated by the fact that he was working for the Anglican controversialist, Thomas Morton, "who had been assigned the delicate responsibility of persuading the English Papists who refused, illegally, to attend Anglican services of the error of their ways ... [and] to present the position of the English State and the Anglican Church, with the hope that the recusancy ... of those sympathetic to Rome might be decreased" (Mueller 14). In writing for Morton, Donne was likely put in the position of sounding more certain about theological matters than he actually was. The Holy Sonnets, then, seem to have provided him with a site where his more authentic, if less decisive voice could surface. As Mueller rightly insists, "Donne's poetic composition during the ... years following Morton's urgent entreaty, in June 1607, that he take orders, is of considerable relevance in any effort to trace his gradual progress toward entrance into the priesthood" (17).

In his Introduction to a recent collection of essays on the poet's religious imagination, Raymond-Jean Frontain makes much of a dynamic that he considers to be the driving force in Donne's sonnets, especially his Holy Sonnets. It is his contention that Donne's imagination "constantly seizes upon the ways that human actions can lift men and women outside space, and project them beyond the boundaries of time, launching humankind from the realm of the profane towards the paradise that he considers 'home'" (9-10). More simply put, "the speaker of a Donne poem seems always to be setting out in hopes of arriving at a more sacred place" (11). These "actions" and this "hope" have, I

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think, much to do with Donne's understanding of the role of a priest. Because of his Catholic connections and his familiarity with contemporary theological controversy, Donne was worried that if he accepted Anglican orders he might not be able to do what needs to be done; and the pun here is very much intended. If he becomes an Anglican priest, Donne knows that he cannot lift the consecrated bread and wine on behalf of the people, an action he had seen Catholic priests perform countless times. It is also possible that he doubts whether he can do the kind of "lifting" that Frontain suspects is his deepest desire, i.e., raising up men and women from the realm of the profane to the sacred. Frontain's conclusions about the Holy Sonnets can serve as an apt introduction to my own reading of them:

> The religious poetry records the paralysis of a spiritual trapeze artist willing to take the death-defying leap only if he can be certain that someone will catch him in his mid-air flight. Desire for reassurance that he will be helped to pass from the profane to the sacred threatens to undermine the very experience of faith. The speaker's longing to transcend sacred time and space may actually entrench him more deeply in the mortifying realm of the profane. (16)

If Donne is indeed suffering from spiritual "paralysis," it is interesting that he stresses the exemplary importance of "active" faith in the dedicatory sonnet, "To Mrs. Magdalen Herbert: of St. Mary Magdalene," which is traditionally placed at the start of

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collections of his divine poems.[144] The sonnet mentions "hymns" which Donne has addressed to Christ, but it is unclear exactly which of his verses he has in mind. It is equally uncertain just how Donne conceived of the purpose of these poems. Unlike Southwell, who is very confident about the ministerial merits of his poetry, Donne asks only that Mrs. Herbert "harbour" his hymns. He does not express any hope that they will have an effect on his reader. It is rather the example of the saint featured in the sonnet that Donne urges Mrs. Herbert to consider. Donne is not afraid to exercise his wit here, playfully pointing out how Mrs. Herbert ought to imitate only the second half of the saint's life just as she shares only the second half of her name: "Take so much of th'example, as of the name:/ The latter half" (11-12). He is also willing to evince his familiarity with the writings of the Fathers of the church and the stuff of medieval legend in regard to the complex issue of Mary Magdalene's identity. He is aware that tradition has likely conflated several biblical characters into one composite saint, and he seems comfortable with this kind of Roman reading of scripture:

> Her of your name, whose fair inheritance
>
> Bethina was, and jointure Magdalo:
>
> ....
>
> ... so much good there is

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[144]The reason for the poem's placement has to do with the fact that Walton printed it in his 1670 *Life of Herbert* after a letter to the poet's mother dated "Mitcham, July 11. 1607." The letter also mentions the otherwise unidentified poems which were included along with it: "By this Messenger, and on this good day, I commit the inclosed Holy Hymns and Sonnets ... to your judgment, and to your protection too, if you think them worthy of it; and I have appointed this inclosed Sonnet to usher them to your happy hand" (cf. Gardner 55).

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Deliver'd of her, that some Fathers be

Loth to believe one Woman could do this;

But, think these Magdalens were two or three. (1-2; 5-8)

What sets Donne's treatment of "the favourite saint of the Counter-Reformation" apart from that of his Catholic contemporaries such as Southwell is the way in which Mary is seen as a herald of the gospel rather than a model penitent (Gardner 57).[145] Donne makes no reference to Mary's confession and conversion except to imply that the second half of her life was holier than the first. What he chooses to foreground, instead, is the quality of her faith: "An active faith so highly did advance,/ That she once knew more than the Church did know,/ The resurrection" (3-5). Whereas Southwell concentrated on the earlier part of Mary Magdalene's career in which she shows sinners how to make a good confession by expressing contrition in shedding copious tears, Donne draws on John's account of the events of Easter morning in order to emphasize her role as preacher (John 20:11-18). Not only is she the first to know of the resurrection, she is also sent by the risen Christ to tell the apostles what she has seen and heard. The implication is that active faith is best expressed in sharing the word, and this implication will be developed in subsequent sonnets as Donne discerns his vocation.

It is also telling that Donne makes no reference to Mary Magdalene's intercessory role. He instructs Mrs. Herbert to imitate her, not to ask for her prayers. That Donne is

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[145]Gardner observes that "it is interesting to find Donne writing so forced and frigid a sonnet on the Magdalene in an age when her cult was so intense. Neither here, nor in his sermons, is his imagination stirred by [her]. She is to him primarily the herald of the Resurrection; cf. LXXX Sermons, xxv. 245, where he even questions whether her sin was necessarily incontinence" (57).

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ambivalent about this traditional Catholic approach to the efficacy of the prayers of saints is also obvious in "A Litanie," and that he would even compose such a prayer is worthy of comment. Litanies are an ancient form of petitionary invocation, and Donne would have been aware that they were always employed during ordination ceremonies. The word in its original Greek means "supplication" or "petition," and the earliest recorded use of the devotional practice dates back to fourth-century Antioch. Litanies, even in this Patristic context, were sung or spoken by clerics, i.e., deacons, priests, and bishops, and from the first they asked for the prayers of the saints. As Michael Walsh reports, it has been "convincingly argued that litanies came to England in 688 in the luggage of St. Theodore when he was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury.... [and] it would seem likely that it was from England ... that the -- originally Greek -- litany was spread in Europe at large" (60). During the era of reform, the use of this devotional practice was obviously debated. As Gardner notes, Cranmer removed the "bead role of saints" from his Litany of 1544, retaining only broad categories of the canonized such as martyrs, confessors, and virgins. During the reign of Edward VI even these categories were considered too Catholic for Anglican worship. They were omitted from the Edwardine Litany and never restored (Gardner 83).

From the thirteenth century on, litanies were associated with the rite of sacerdotal ordination. In the *Pontifical of Durandus*, a ritual book which would set the norm throughout Western Christendom in subsequent centuries, litanies were sung while the candidates for orders lay prostrate on the floor of the church:

It [was] a mark of great devotion and earnest supplication. If we look at

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> the Bible, we see that the Jews normally stood to pray; they knelt down only in moments of great stress; very rarely they lay prostrate -- as for example the people did before the High Priest for his solemn blessing on the Day of Atonement.... However, as the ordinands have just been told that "as they celebrate the mysteries of our Lord's death, they must be earnest in mortifying their members of all vice and concupiscence," it will not be inappropriate for them to recognize in their prostration a symbol of the mystical death they must die, so that when they rise up to receive the priesthood in a few moments, they rise as if from a tomb in which they have left behind their vices and concupiscence. (Bligh 85).

That the litany came to be specifically concerned with priestly consecration is made clear at its conclusion when the bishop makes the sign of the cross over the ordinands while singing, "That Thou wouldst deign to bless these chosen ones, ... That Thou wouldst deign to bless and sanctify these chosen ones, ... That Thou wouldst deign to bless, sanctify, and consecrate these chosen ones, we beseech thee to hear us" (Bligh 87-88). In the *Second Prayer Book of Edward VI*, the use of the litany during ordination is retained, but with some significant differences. Prostration is proscribed, and sins, rather than saints, are listed in great numbers:

> From fornicacion, and all other deadlye synne, and from all the deceyptes of the worlde, the flesshe, and the deuyl.... From all sedicion and priuie conspiracie, from the tyrannie of the Bisshop of Rome, and all hys detestable enormities, from all false doctryne and heresy, from hardness of

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> hearte, and contempt of thy word and commaundemente. Good Lord
> deliuer us. (440)

In the Edwardine Litany prayers for the king and various government officials are more numerous than are prayers for those chosen to be clerics. When the latter are finally mentioned, God is asked "to blesse these men, and send [his] grace upon them, that they may duely execute thy offyce, nowe to be commytted unto them" (441).

In his 1608 "Litanie," Donne sets out to walk a very fine line between the religion of his birth and that of his nation. If Bligh is correct in connecting the devotion with stressful moments, then it makes sense that Donne would avail himself of a litany at this particular time in his life when he knows that he is on the verge of a major decision. The intended audience for this litany is his friends, and it is clear in a letter to Goodyer that Donne still numbers both Catholics and Protestants among these:

> Since my imprisonment in my bed, I have made a meditation in verse, which I call a Litanie.... Amongst ancient annals, I mean some 800 years, I have met two Litanies in Latin verse, which gave me not the reason of my meditations, for in good faith I thought not upon them then, but they gave me a defense, if any man; to a Lay man, and a private impute it as a fault, to take such divine and public names, to his own little thoughts. The first of these was made by Ratpertus, a Monk of Suevia; and the other by St. Notker ...; they were both but monks, and the Litanies poor and barbarous enough; yet Pope Nicholas the 5, valued their devotion so much, that he canonized both their poems, and commanded them for public service in

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> their Churches: mine is for lesser Chappels, which are my friends.... That by which it will deserve best acceptation, is, that neither the Roman Church need call it defective, because it abhors not the particular mention of the blessed Triumphers in heaven; nor the Reformed can discreetly accuse it, of attributing more then a rectified devotion ought to do. (*Letters* 32-34).

Obviously, Donne is very aware of his status as an unordained member of the church, even though it is impossible to determine just which church he has in mind; and he is self-conscious about employing clerical forms of worship to which he can lay no legitimate claim. He does not want to overstep the boundaries which separate priests from lay people. As a result, he proceeds with great caution throughout.

"A Litanie" begins with several 9-line stanzas addressed to the three persons of the Trinity. The speaker starts with an admission of his "ruinous" state and his need for "re-creation" through purgation. In a move that he will make in several of his preordination poems addressed to God, most notably "As due by many titles," Donne reminds God of the nature of their relationship and of the poet's right to the attentions and affections of the one who created and redeemed him. His insistence on this score serves to foreground the fact that Donne perceives some distance between himself and the object of his devotions. By reminding God of the role that he should be playing in the poet's life, Donne hopes that distance will be overcome. There is, however, something contractual rather than comforting about this relationship as Donne conceives it. Donne relies upon God's quasi-legal obligations rather than God's love, and the poet is clearly the passive partner in all this. It is God who must make the move toward him, "purg[ing] away/ All

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vicious tinctures" (8).

When Donne turns his attentions to the Virgin Mary in Stanza V he mentions her "titles unto [God]" as well (45). Like the poet, the Mother of God can claim certain rights, but hers are based on merit. Striking what sounds to be a very Catholic note, Donne calls Mary "That she-Cherubin/ Which unlock'd Paradise" (38-39). As a result of her role in redemption, she deserves our thanks and God's ear: "As her deeds were/ Our helpes, so are her prayers; nor can she sue/ In vaine, who hath such titles unto you" (43-45). The poet is very careful here, however. He mentions the power of Mary's prayers, but he never asks for them. In fact, unlike traditional Catholic litanies which ask directly for the intercession of Mary and the saints on our behalf, Donne addresses God throughout. He talks *about* heaven's "blessed Triumphers," but not *to* them. Mary's prayers are understood to be efficacious on account of what she has done for God, but there is never a sense that she might do anything for Donne directly.

The same is true in terms of the rest of the heavenly court. Like Cranmer, Donne calls up the various categories of angels and saints, the members of the church triumphant, but he is consistently ambivalent about their relationship to the members of the church on earth. He acknowledges, for example, how the patriarchs and prophets can pray for us, but he avoids asking for their help. He is even quite specific about the possible effect of their prayers on him and on his verse. The prophets are "heavenly Poets" whose intercession, though unasked for, will keep his artfulness in check:

> Those heavenly Poets which did see
>
> Thy will, and expresse

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In rythmique feet, in common pray for mee,

That I by them excuse not my excesse

In seeking secrets, or Poetiquenesse. (68-72)

In this stanza there is a note of anxiety about the poet's authorial agency which will only intensify as the sequence draws toward its conclusion. Like the prophets, the apostles, too, must serve as a check on Donne's role in the scheme of redemption. In Stanza IX, on God's "illustrious Zodiacke/ Of twelve apostles," for the first time the poet seems to fashion himself as a teacher and an interpreter of scripture. It is, however, a role that makes him nervous. He is worried that he might assert himself and, in so doing, compromise the integrity of God's word. He considers the example and inspiration of the apostles and asks God to circumscribe his agency: "O decline/ Mee, when my comment would make thy word mine" (80-81).

His anxieties about getting in the way of God's word are again addressed in Stanza XXI. Here it is the exercise of wit that merits a warning: "When wee are mov'd to seeme religious/ Only to vent wit, Lord deliver us" (188-89). After almost two hundred lines of verse Donne still seems unsure about what he should say regarding God or whether he is able to say anything at all. Even in the middle of writing a lengthy liturgical poem, Donne admits to his spiritual paralysis: "Hear us, for till thou hear us Lord/ We know not what to say" (203-4). He seems caught between his desire to do something for God and his sense that any such doing is absolutely dependent upon God's initiative. He seems shy even about claiming prayer as his own: "Heare thy selfe now, for thou in us dost pray" (207). In Donne's "Litanie" there is none of Southwell's confidence about writing poems. Instead,

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there is anxiety from which the poet prays to be delivered (Stanza XV). At the end of "A Litanie" Donne still seems unsure of many things, including whether and how to address God and whether or how to write religious poetry.

In a series of meditations, the composition of which Gardner dates to 1609, Donne develops the notion of the distance he feels from God. He repeatedly writes on his doubts about his ability to do much of anything in regard to his spiritual situation. In the first of these, "As due by many titles," he wants to "resigne" himself to the God who made and redeemed him (1). He can do little else, it seems, because the devil has "usurped" him (9). He wants to be God's "servant," but for some reason God refuses to "chuse" him: "Except thou rise and for thine owne work fight,/ Oh I shall soon despaire, when I doe see/ That thou lov'st mankind well, yet wilt'not chuse me" (11-13). It is important to note that the speaker in the poem seems as passive in regard to evil as he is in regard to good. There is only one hint that he has cooperated with Satan, and interestingly enough, the sin which he singles out is "betrayal" (7). Otherwise, the distance between the speaker and God is all on account of the devil's activity. The devil "usurpes" (9), "steals" and "ravishes" (10), and "hates" (14). Of the three characters featured in this sonnet, only two, God and the devil, seem capable of agency. Donne himself can find no avenue for action. He does not even consider the possibility of doing penance. Resignation has replaced repentance.

In the three meditations that follow, "Oh my blacke Soule," "This is my playes last scene," and "At the round earths imagin'd corners," Donne examines the situation of the paralyzed soul *in extremis*. In doing so he is likely employing Ignatian meditations which

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are meant to be made at the time of election or when choosing a way of life. In the *Spiritual Exercises*, Loyola recommends that the one faced with a vocational discernment consider his options from the perspectives of his death bed and the Last Judgment. The point of these prayers is to ask which vocational possibility looks most like God's will in the light of imminent death and the end of the world. The reasons why the poet might turn to these passages in the *Exercises* at this time when he is particularly plagued with uncertainty about his state in life is clear enough. "Oh my blacke Soule" and "This is my plays last scene" seem to be more than accidentally related to Ignatius's Third Rule of the so-called "Second Way to Make a Good and Sound Election":

> The third, to consider, as if I were at the point of death, the form and measure which I would then want to have kept in the way of the present election, and regulating myself by that election, let me make my decision in everything. [186]

This "Second Way" is prescribed for one who has already asked God "to move [his] will and place in [his] soul what [he] ought to do regarding the thing proposed" [180]. Only when this first and more direct method fails should the exercitant take up the more extreme and dramatic approaches of deathbed and doomsday meditations. Such drama seems to suit Donne very well, and he gives himself to the exercises with great enthusiasm. The problem for the poet, however, is that he undermines his own prayer by doubting its efficacy. He knows that the nearness of his end should move him to repent, but he cannot bring himself to do it:

> Oh my blacke Soule! Now thou are summoned

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By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;

....

Yet grace, if thou repent, thou canst not lack;

But who shall give thee that grace to begin? (1-2; 9-10)

It is telling that in describing the situation of his paralyzed soul Donne turns to the experience of "pilgrims" who have committed "treason" while abroad (3-4). They wish to return home but cannot. The poet may have been particularly familiar with the sentiments of such people on account of his family's experience of religious exile. Donne seems to stand apart from his relatives, however, in that while they "durst not turne" to England, they do have access to the means by which they can "turne" to God, namely the sacraments. They may be stuck physically on the continent; he is stuck spiritually in his sinfulness.

In "This is my plays last scene" Donne writes again about his inability to make up his mind or to make any other move for that matter. As if to convince himself of the immediacy of death, he employs no less than five images for his end, starting with the theatrical reference found in the first line. The others include "my pilgrimages last mile" (2); "my race['s] last pace (2-3); "my span's last inch" (4); and "my minute's last point" (4). Donne seems to be outdoing even the most exacting of Jesuit directors of the *Exercises* in underscoring the seriousness of his spiritual situation. Nonetheless, he remains stuck. God must make the first move and "impute [him] righteous" (13). In the midst of an Ignatian meditation the poet is making room for a particularly Protestant concept. While the context of his prayer remains decidedly Catholic, its content is taken

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up with a consideration of Anglican doctrine. As Gardner notes, by Donne's time the Anglican church had begun to follow the lead of continental reformers in teaching that even though a soul may be purged of its actual sins by penitence, "the soul is not righteous -- it bears the 'imputed guilt' of Adam; it can only be 'imputed righteous' by the merit of Christ" (67). It seems that Donne is not only unsure about what he might do in regard to discerning his state in life, he is equally confused about what to think in more general theological matters.

"At the round earths imagin'd corners" serves as a similarly interesting and less-than-certain twist on Ignatius Loyola's "Fourth Rule for Making a Good and Sound Election." Here, Loyola is prescribing a spiritual last chance for those who remain unmoved even after praying over the prospect of their own death:

> The fourth, looking and considering how I shall find myself on the Day of Judgment, to think how I would then want to have deliberated about the present matter, and to take now the rule which I would then wish to have kept, in order that I may find myself in entire pleasure and joy. [187]

The poet does what Ignatius asks. He hears the trumpets sound, sees the angels arrive, watches the dead rise from their graves, and considers how souls are reunited with their bodies. The sonnet's apocalyptic octet might have been written by Loyola himself. In the sextet, however, the Saint's instructions get lost amid in the poet's self-concerns. Until line 9 Donne is a compliant actor in what is now not simply his own but all of creation's "last scene." All of a sudden he steps out of character and asks God to stop. Just as the armies of the dead awaken, "all whom warre, dearthe, age, agues, tyrannies,/ Despaire,

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law, chance, hath slaine" (6-7), Donne interjects to ask for more time:

> But let them sleepe, Lord, and mee mourne a space,
>
> For, if above these, my sinnes abound,
>
> 'Tis late to aske abundance of thy grace,
>
> When we are there; here on this lowly ground,
>
> Teach me to repent; for that's as good
>
> As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood. (9-14)

That Donne thinks he needs a lesson in repentance is remarkable considering the background of his Catholic boyhood. He is obviously coming to think that the methods of which he once availed himself no longer work. It seems that he has lost faith in the kind of consolation promised by sacramental confession, and he asks instead for fear and trembling. The God to whom he is answerable for his sins is hardly Southwell's "mild Christ." In "If poysonous minerals," for example, Donne's God "threatens" in "his sterne wrath," and the best the speaker can hope for is that God will forget, as opposed to forgive, his sins: "That thou remember them, some claim as debt,/ I thinke it mercy, if thou wilt forget" (13-14).

Forgetting is hardly as intimate an interaction as forgiving, and this lack of intimacy between Donne and God is observable in other of Donne's preordination poems. In "Spit in my face yee Jewes," this distance may be on account of the perceived seriousness of his sins. Unlike those whom he holds responsible for Christ's death on Calvary, the speaker here knows very well what he is doing and to whom he is doing it:

> My sinnes ... passe the Jewes impiety:

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They kill'd once an inglorious man, but I

Crucifie him daily, being now glorified. (6-8)

At this remove he asks only that he might "admire" Christ's "strange love" (9). Admiration is something quite different from a personal experience of God's affection. Donne is an observer of the scheme of salvation rather than a participant in it. He watches what happens and knows that the proper reaction to this "strange" phenomenon is fear and wonder. What Donne does in this poem is yet another inversion of Ignatius Loyola's intentions in the *Spiritual Exercises.* Again, the poet is following the Jesuit's instructions at the start of the poem, but by its end he interrupts the dynamic of the prescribed devotion and turns it into something very different from what Loyola imagined. In the Third Week of the *Exercises*, which contains contemplations on the passion and death of Christ, the exercitant is urged to operate under the following assumption: "It belongs to the Passion to ask for grief with Christ in grief, anguish with Christ in anguish, tears and interior pain at such great pain which Christ suffered for me" [203]. As instructed, Donne asks for grief, but he, not Christ, becomes the center of attention in the sonnet. Rather than entering into the events of the passion in order to feel their effects, Donne stands at a distance and dwells on the sinful details of his own life. The only thing he asks to feel is awe: "Oh let me then, his strange love still admire" (9).

Similarly, in "Why are we by all creatures waited on?," Donne maintains the observer's stance. He notes how all of creation is put at humankind's disposal, and then he turns his attention to the fact that the Creator has died for us. Donne describes himself as God's "foe"(14), and decides that the best he can do is "wonder" at God's saving deeds

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from a comfortable distance (11). Unlike the horse and the bull who have not sinned, the poet has good reason to be "timorous" (10). The corruption of sin makes him think of himself as incapable of approaching God, and the kind of desolation that results makes for the desperate tone of poems such as "Batter my Heart, three person'd God."

Of all Donne's preordination religious poems, this frequently anthologized sonnet most clearly registers his sense of spiritual helplessness. The implication, at least at the start, is that God must take action because Donne has no effective means of doing so. Until such time as God uses "force" to "make [him] new," the poet thinks that the only honest stance is one of pure passivity. He has "labour[ed] to admit" God into his heart, "but ... to no end" (6). As in "As due by many titles," the speaker reaches at first for a political simile to explain his situation. He is "like an usurpt town," too weak to work for its own liberation. The cause of his weakness is total corruption, and the only thing that he can do while waiting for God to take him by force is to cry out. By the sonnet's end, metaphors get mixed and genders get bent. Still shouting for help, the speaker is now a woman betrothed to the enemy of the one by whom she wants to be "ravished" (14). Only when she is imprisoned and enthralled by her forceful lover will she be free.

Here, Donne uses a sexual paradox to describe his relationship with God, and not for the last time. In this sonnet, the speaker plays the passive partner who waits to be "taken" (12). In "Show me deare Christ, thy spouse," however, a poem written five years after his ordination, it will be Donne who does the taking. In the intervening years he has somehow become "an amorous soule" who has the desire and the power to "make love." In "Batter my heart," Donne wants to *be* the Bride of Christ. In "Show me deare Christ,"

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he wants to *embrace* the same. Somehow, in and through his ordination, Donne seems empowered. He acquires a kind of agency which is so obviously lacking in his preordination poems. It is my contention that this acquisition of agency, most dramatically expressed in terms of the poet's re-masculation in "Show me dear Christ they spouse," is the result of Donne's efforts at a kind of sacerdotal self-fashioning which is perforce devoid of almost all sacramental content. In the middle years of his life, the years of vocational discernment, Donne comes to discover and admit that he powerless. In his powerlessness he cries out again and again, until eventually he realizes that there is some agency in the ability to articulate. Perhaps *the* fundamental paradox for Donne is that there is power in articulating powerlessness. He can do nothing but speak out of his own misery, but at least he can do that. Like the patron of the Cathedral where he will come to serve as Dean, Donne learns that his weakness is the source of his strength.[146] As St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 12:10, "I am content with weakness ... for when I am weak, then I am strong." As an Anglican priest, Donne may not have the power to offer the sacrifice of the mass, but there is a certain kind of strength in the sound of his own voice. In his post-ordination poetry such as "To Mr. Tilman," and even more so in his sermons, he will eschew references to the former and exalt in the latter.

In poems that come at the start of Donne's vocational discernment, he expresses some wariness about using his voice to win God's attention, if not God's love. In "If

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[146]Donne's appointment to the Deanship of St. Paul's in 1621 is the best evidence we have that he became a confident and accomplished preacher. According to Mueller, "there was perhaps no pulpit in England ... which influenced the life of the nation so profoundly as that of St. Paul's Cathedral" (28).

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poysonous minerals," for example, he asks outright about the propriety of arguing with the Almighty. After insinuating that God goes easier on "lecherous goats" and "envious serpents" than he does on humankind, the poet doubts whether it is wise to continue this conversation. The sonnet turns on the question, "But who am I that dare dispute with thee?" (9). Likewise, Donne's vocational discernment may well turn on the answer. We may be God's defeated "foes," but even as such we can sue for the terms of surrender.

In a later and more complicated poem, "Father, part of his double interest," Donne seems far more confident about his ability to talk his way into the kingdom of heaven. He may no longer have Catholic sacraments and sacrifices at his disposal, but he is coming to believe in salvation by articulation. His voice can carry him some of the distance between the profane and the sacred. He begins to bargain with God, and the negotiations concern Christ's "will" which needs to be probated. Donne calls upon what he learned at the Inns of Court, no doubt, and he is suing for his "Legacie" (7). He admits that living up to the letter of God's law is impossible for him or for anyone else. None of us, he claims, can do that. By way of substitution or compensation, he places his hope for salvation in the fact that he can speak his mind. Word replaces sacrament here, but not in the traditionally Protestant sense. It is not so much God's Word as Donne's own that wins salvation. As he moves toward ministry in the Anglican church, the poet substitutes confidence in self-expression for reliance upon sacramental efficacy. It may well be this kind of confidence that he has in mind when he tells Goodyer about "the comfort" he has found is his "sadder meditations" (Cf. Bald 235). His closing argument in the sonnet consists of forcefully reminding God of his own final words in the Last Supper discourse of John's gospel: "Thy

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lawes abridgement, and thy last command/ Is all but love; Oh let that last Will stand!" (13-14).

In "Oh, to vex me contraryes meet in one," a poem which Gardner believes was written very close to the time of Donne's ordination, he still seems a bit wary of his new-found approach to God. He describes the variety of methods he has used and is using to overcome his spiritual paralysis, and he admits to harboring some lingering uncertainty about which is best: "I durst not view heaven yesterday; and to day/ In prayers, and flattering speeches I court God: To morrow I quake with true feare of his rod" (9-11). This unwillingness or inability to gaze in God's direction is nothing new. In "Thou hast made me, And shall thy work decay?," for instance, Donne complains that his eyes, like the rest of his parts, are immobilized. "I dare not," he writes, "move my dimme eyes" (5). He may be afraid of looking at God, but he is willing to talk to God. His eyes may not be able to move, but his mouth certainly can. And it does with increasing confidence after 1615.

Some of this newly gained confidence in the religious role of his voice can be found in The First and Second Anniversaries. These two poems, written in 1611 and 1612 as memorials to Elizabeth Drury, are unique among Donne's verses in that he supervised their publication and saw to it that they found a rather wide audience. They were, in fact, his best known works. As W. Milgate reports in his Introduction to *The Epithalamions, Anniversaries, and Epicedes*, "there were four editions of 'A Funeral Elegy,' and *The First Anniversary*, and three of *The Second Anniversary*, before the first collected edition of the *Poems* in 1633." On account of this, "for readers of poetry outside the fairly

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restricted band of amateurs among whom Donne's other poetry circulated in manuscript he was from 1612 to 1633 the poet of the *Anniversaries*" (xxxiii). In "An Anatomy of the World" the poet refers specifically to the power of speech. His aim is to lift his voice in order to raise himself and the world from "Letargee" (24). In the months after the death of Elizabeth Drury all have lost their "sense and memory" (28). The poet has the power to renew the spiritually beneficial "misery" which so many felt when Drury died. He can reopen the "wound" which the world incurred at her death and bring to mind her memory. At the start of his poem he describes the lethargic world's sorry state: "Twas heavy then to hear thy voice of mone,/ But this is worse, that thou art speechless growne" (29-30). He will take it upon himself to "celebrate [her] name" even if this causes pain. Though others keep silent because they think it "some blasphemy to say sh'was dead;/ Or that our weakenes was discovered / In that confession," Donne understands the paradoxical relationship between admitting weakness and acquiring strength:

> I (since no man can make thee live) will trie,
>
> What we may gaine by thy Anatomy.
>
> Her death hath taught us dearly, that thou art
>
> Corrupt and mortall in thy purest part. (59-62)

This may not sound like good news, but Donne insists that it is. Drury's death has ushered in a new world, and "This new world may be safer, being told/ The dangers and diseases of the old:/ For with due temper men do then forgoe,/ Or covet things, when they their true worth know" (87-90). Donne's mission will be to estimate the world's worth and to articulate it for his new-found audience. He does so in no uncertain terms:

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> Shee, shee is dead, she's dead; when thou knowst this
>
> Thou knowst how ugly'a monster this world is:
>
> And learnst thus much by our Anatomee,
>
> That here is nothing to enamor thee. (325-28)

At the conclusion of the poem Donne has more to say about his confidence in the power of his voice. The fact that God employs the same vehicle for making his will known gives Donne a sense of surety about what he is doing here. God "spake to Moses" and "Such an opinion (in due measure) made/ Me this great Office boldly to invade" (467-68).

This same boldness characterizes "Of the Progress of the Soule" which follows *The First Anniversary* by twelve months. Though the poet accuses many of having forgotten much in the meantime, he remembers both the lesson to be found in meditating on Drury's death and what he has learned about the power of his voice. As opposed to early efforts such as "To Mrs. Magdalene Herbert" where Donne's poems lack a ministerial purpose, *The Second Anniversary* shows how Donne is coming to understand his vocation. His aim is clear:

> These Hymmes may worke on future wits, and so
>
> May great Grand-children of thy praises grow.
>
> And so, though not Revive, embalme, and spice
>
> The world, which else would putrify with vice. (37-40)

Donne is no longer a "timorous" soul who keeps a comfortable distance from God. He has come to understand himself as God's instrument: "I ame/ The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came" (527-28). Armed with such an understanding he can approach

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ordination.

The reasons why Donne ultimately takes orders in the Anglican church are a matter of much debate. Most scholars are quick to ascribe some ulterior motive. For example, Mueller suggests that it is arguable "had Donne been able to satisfy his secular ambitions, it is unlikely that he would have considered ordination" (13). As the Holy Sonnets reveal, the years leading up to 1615 were marked by a great deal of anxiety and for very understandable reasons. Again, Mueller describes the first decades of the seventeenth century, when Donne was in his late twenties and early thirties, as "the most abysmal time" in the poet's life. Ordination, he claims, was a means of escaping all this. Moreover, Bald observes how this same period was certainly "the most disturbed and anxious" that the poet would ever know (232). He points out how Morton had been trying to convince his assistant to join the ministerial ranks as early as 1607. Donne successfully ignored his advice for eight years, while in the meantime he sought again and again for secular advancement. Bald documents his efforts to secure, "successively and vainly," a position in Queen Anne's household, a secretaryship in Ireland, and a similar post in Virginia (15). Finally, according to Bald, after "many debates between God and himself," Donne presents himself for ordination, convinced of the "futility of seeking secular preferment" (293). As Bald and Mueller would have it, the poet approaches the altar as a disappointed office seeker who is desperate for any employment. Cary, likewise, explains Donne's acquiescence to taking orders in terms of his frustrated desire to succeed in some secular field or another:

Ambition is, then, a constant element in Donne's life, linking the young

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> soldier and civil servant with the mature divine. His ambitious marriage ruined him, and left him struggling ambitiously to repair the damage. There is no avoiding the fact that he battened on the great unblushingly. (76)

While these biographers make Donne out to be a kind of poet-*cum*-presbyteral parasite, I want to make a case that the Holy Sonnets reveal a man of more integrity. Donne did not proceed to the altar with anything approaching haste. He was quite deliberate in his move toward ministry, and the care he took was a result of the degree to which he needed to "wrastle" with subtle theological arguments which impinged upon his sacerdotal self-understanding. Donne hesitated before entering the Anglican ministry, in part, because he needed to come to terms with his very sensitive and very Catholic conscience. The Holy Sonnets reveal the "wrastlings" of a man who had the religious rug pulled out from under him. He had learned all his life to approach God through sacraments and sacrifice as these were understood in the Roman church. Once he casts his lot in with the Church of England, he needs to find a new medium. Until he does so, he is reluctant to lead others. He seems to have known that spiritual paralysis is not the best qualification for priesthood. Were he as ambitious and cynical as most of his biographers make him out to be, why would he have hesitated so long before accepting a post which promised at least a modicum of success? Donne's hesitation in regard to ordination has to do with a significant degree of theological sensitivity. That sensitivity is sufficiently satisfied, I think, when Donne discovers the soteriological value of his voice.

For Donne, unlike Southwell, poetry is propaedeutic to priesthood rather than an integral part of it. In this sense, his poetry is more personal than priestly. The sonnets are

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sites where he works out an answer to the question of what, if anything, he can do for God; and this may go some part of the way in explaining their much maligned self-centeredness. The Holy Sonnets and the Anniversaries are the record of one man's vocational discernment, but it is a record shot through with the religious anxieties of his age. Writing poetry helped Donne discover the saving power of his own voice, a voice that he himself had to struggle to hear amid the clamor of Reformation and Counter-Reformation debates. Given Donne's peculiar position as a member of one of England's most prominent and controversial families, that clamor must have seemed almost deafening at times. Once he discovers the efficacy of self-expression, Donne will mostly leave poetry behind and take up preaching. The pulpit, not the poem, is where Donne chooses to exercise his ministry, but he could never have ascended the former had the latter not afforded him the opportunity to descend into despair and discover there the saving power of his own voice.[147]

If Donne mostly leaves poetry behind once he gets ordained, the same cannot be said for all of his sacerdotal and sacramental anxieties.[148] As the Tilman poem indicates, he copes with or compensates for these, but they are never entirely resolved. Donne seems

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[147]Donne's preference for and attachment to the pulpit is perhaps nowhere more obvious than in a 1631 letter to George Gerrard: "It hath been my desire (and God may be pleased to grant it me) that I might die in the pulpit; if not that, yet that I might take my death in the pulpit, that is, die the sooner by occasion of my former labours" (Gosse II, 268-69).

[148]Here, I am taking issue with Mueller who contends that "we have no evidence to suggest that [Donne] ever questioned his decision [to be ordained], once it was made" (25). I do not want to argue that Donne regretted taking orders, but I do want to show how he had reservations about exercising the sacramental responsibilities with which he was charged.

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always to remember his reading of Bellarmine, who based his own defense of the sacrament of orders on the Decrees of Trent. As a result, Donne would have understood that the Catholic affirmation of the priestly office amounted to a direct response to aforementioned Protestant concerns about priests offering sacrifice. Trent decreed, and Bellarmine defended, the following doctrine:

> Sacrifice and priesthood are so joined together by God's foundation that each exists in every law. And so, since in the new covenant the catholic church has received the visible sacrifice of the eucharist from the Lord's institution, it is also bound to profess that there is in it a new, visible, and external priesthood into which the old has been changed. The sacred scriptures show, and the tradition of the catholic church has always taught, that this was instituted by the same Lord our savior, and that the power was given to the apostles and their successors in the priesthood to consecrate, offer, and administer his body and blood, as also to remit or retain sins. (Tanner 742)

Moreover, both the Council and Bellarmine taught that "grace is conferred in sacred ordination carried out by words and external signs," and that "in the sacrament of orders, as in baptism and confirmation, a character is imprinted which cannot be deleted or removed" (742).

Donne, through his "suruey of the whole body of diuinity,"surely knew that his family's Church considered anyone who opposed these doctrines to be anathema. He also knew that Catholics had rejected the validity of Anglican orders on the basis of the

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theological positions articulated in these same Conciliar Decrees. Anglican orders had been a vexed issue since 1550 when Cranmer substituted the Edwardine for the Roman Ordinal. This new ordination rite, which was further revised along more radical lines in 1552, was used until the Marian restoration. One of the Catholic Queen's first acts was to denounce all Edwardine ordinations as invalid and impious. In 1554, she issued a decree urging all "to be vigilant touching such persons who were heretofore promoted to any Orders after the new sort and fashion of orders, considering that they were not ordered in very deed" (Hughes 255). If any men ordained during Edward's reign wanted to function as presbyters during his successor's, they had to be reordained; and Mary's insistence was soon echoed in Bulls published by Popes Julius III and Paul IV.

When Elizabeth claimed the throne after five years of Catholic restoration, the situation became more complicated when no validly ordained bishop would agree to consecrate Matthew Parker, who was to be the first primate of the new Elizabethan hierarchy. When the Queen eventually prevailed upon four bishops with Protestant leanings to consecrate her man, she insisted that they use the Edwardine formula.[149] For Rome this constituted the last straw. Once the new Archbishop of Canterbury, from whom the succession of Anglican orders is derived, was consecrated with a defective formulary, there was no possibility that any subsequent ordination, including Donne's, could be

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[149]Hughes explains the various controversies surrounding Parker's consecration, including the notorious "Nag's Head Fable." According to this baseless rumor first published by an Irish Jesuit in 1604, Parker was consecrated after a dinner held at the Nag's Head Tavern, Cheapside. The fable continued to be rehearsed by Catholic scholars well into this century.

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valid.[150]

The defect in the formula of Anglican ordinations is owing to the fact that Cranmer had seen to it that the Edwardine Ordinal made no mention of the sacerdotal power to offer the sacrifice of the Mass. Such an omission renders the ordination invalid because unless a sacramental character is specifically named during the ritual, that character cannot be conferred. In other words, since no bishop referred to Donne at his ordination as a priest who could offer the sacrifice of the Mass, Donne was not a validly ordained priest.[151] Leo XIII further clarifies the issue in his reading of the Edwardine Ordinal:

Hence not only is there in the whole Ordinal no clear mention of sacrifice,

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[150]While the Catholic position on Anglican orders was never in dispute, it was not until 1896 that a definitive statement on the issue was made by Leo XIII in *Apostolicae Curae*. In reaction against some Anglo-Catholics who were hoping for a reassessment of the Catholic position, Leo wrote, "Wherefore adhering entirely to the Decrees of the Pontiffs our predecessors on this subject, and fully ratifying and reviewing them by our own authority, on our own initiative and with certain knowledge, we pronounce and declare that ordinations performed according to the Anglican rite have been and are completely null and utterly void."

[151]One of the major sticking points in the debate about the validity of ordinations performed according to the Edwardine Ordinal has to do with the omission of very particular gestures and the words that accompany them. In the Roman ritual, the ordinand's hands are anointed with oil as the bishop says, "May Jesus preserve you to sanctify the Christian people and to offer sacrifice to God." Following this, the bishop presents a chalice and a patten to the ordinand with the words, "Accept from the holy people of God the gifts to be offered to Him." Cranmer removed these words and gestures, substituting instead a ritual in which a bible is placed on the ordinands' heads (Hughes 268). That Catholic reaction against such an omission was strong is evinced in Edmund Bonner's *A profitable and necessary doctrine for every Christian man*, issued with Queen Mary's approval in 1555: "The late made ministers in the time of schism, in their new devised ordination, having no authority at all given them to offer in the Mass the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ, but both they so ordered (or rather disordered), that their schismatical orderers also, utterly despising and impugning not only the oblation or sacrifice of the Mass, but also the Real Presence of the Body and Blood of our Savior Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the altar" (Hughes 257).

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> of consecration, of priesthood, of the power to consecrate and offer sacrifice, but, as We have already indicated, every trace of these and similar things remaining in such prayers of the Catholic rite as were not completely rejected, was purposefully removed and obliterated. The native character and spirit of the Ordinal, as one might say, is thus objectively evident. Moreover, incapable as it was of conferring valid orders by reason of its original defectiveness, and remaining as it did in that condition, there was no prospect that with the passage of time it would become capable of conferring them. (*Apostolicae Curae*)

If the Edwardine Ordinal makes no mention of the connection between priesthood and offering sacrifice, Donne's pre-ordination poetry certainly does. Even when these poems mention priesthood in a non-Christian context, there is always a concomitant reference to sacrifice. The earliest of such references occurs in "The Comparison." Most scholars agree that Donne's Elegies belong to his Inns of Court days, and in Elegy VIII the kind of competitive humor characteristic of that period is evident enough. The speaker compares his own mistress to his friend's, and in lines that are redolent of a modern day locker room, we read about how the two couples perform in the bedroom. The speaker casts aspersions on his friend's love making: "Is not your last act harsh, and violent,/ As where a Plough a stony ground doth rent?" (47-48). His own experience with his mistress is quite different:

> So kisse good Turtles, so devoutly nice
>
> Are priests in handling reverent sacrifice,

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And such in searing wounds the surgeon is

As we, when we embrace, or touch, or kisse. (49-52)

Even in so bawdy a setting, Donne connects priesthood with sacrifice, albeit in a seemingly irreverent way.

In a second work dating from this same period, "Epithalamion made at Lincoln's Inne," Donne describes priesthood and sacrifice in a pre-Christian setting. In his reading of this work, Bald mentions that "some critics have been disturbed by the forced and tasteless conceits that occur here and there in the poem," and the reference to priesthood in ll. 87-90 is certainly one of these. It is likely that this piece was written for a wedding celebration, which makes it all the more odd that the poet describes love making in terms of ritual slaughter: "And [she] at the Bridegroomes wish'd approach doth lye,/ Like an appointed lambe, when tenderly/ The priest comes on his knees t'embowell her." John Carey points out the ominous tone of these lines when he observes that "despite the tenderness of the priest's approach, ... we are inevitably aware that the lamb's bowels are going to end up in a soft heap on the floor, and that something comparable in its violence is to happen to the bride" (129). Whatever the tone and no matter how odd the poem, Donne clearly acknowledges a connection between pagan priesthood and sacrifice.

Again, in "The Calme," written in 1597, sacrifice and priesthood are joined. Here, Donne describes sailors languishing aboard a ship which has been becalmed for several days: "And on the hatches as on Altar lyes/ Each one, his own Priest, and his own Sacrifice" (25-26). Later, in 1613, he will employ the notion of sacrificial priesthood in a similar way in the third stanza of "The Litanie." In this prayer to the Holy Ghost, Donne

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asks for a particular grace:

> Double in my heart thy flame,
>
> Which let devout sad tears intend; and let
>
> (Though this glasse lanthorne, flesh, do suffer maime)
>
> Fire, Sacrifice, Priest, Altar be the same.

Ironically, perhaps, this last allusion to priesthood, which comes just two years before Donne's ordination, seems most Catholic in its sensibilities. Donne wants to be transformed by the grace of the Spirit so that he can offer sacrifices, including the sacrifice of self, upon the altar. This is language which may of his Protestant contemporaries would have found objectionable. When all of these references are considered together, they seem to indicate that Donne was well aware of the Roman insistence that the function of a priest, any priest, is to offer sacrifice. It is almost as if he is confirming the claim made at the Council of Trent that "sacrifice and priesthood are so joined together ... that each exists in every law." Even when Donne's priests are making love or worshiping pagan gods, they are always fashioned as somehow offering sacrifice.

All such allusions to priests offering sacrifice stop after Donne is ordained in 1615. In "To Mr Tilman," for example, when Donne enumerates the "advantages" and "preheminences" accruing to the "ministry," there is no mention of offering sacrifice. Instead, Donne studiously avoids the notion altogether and, in typical fashion, he privileges preaching: "Maries prerogative was to beare Christ, so/ 'Tis preachers to convey him, for they doe/ As Angels out of clouds, from Pulpits speake" (41-43). Here, Donne refers to other ministerial functions, but they are limited to baptism, burying the

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dead, and dispensing blessings.[152] Ordained Anglican ministers, including Donne and Tilman, were certainly charged with presiding at the Eucharist, and it is noteworthy that Donne rarely, if ever, makes any clear reference to this "function."[153] In the Tilman poem, for example, the closest he comes to a eucharistic allusion is in ll. 47-48 when he writes, "How brave are those, who with their Engine, can/ Bring man to heaven and, heaven again to man?" In the context of the rest of the poem, however, it makes more sense to read these lines as related to the minister's role as emissary, a role which Donne so clearly cherishes. As "Embassador to God and destinie," Donne can fashion himself superior to the gentry and even to the King, who, interestingly enough, had refused to appoint Donne as Ambassador to Venice just months before his ordination.[154]

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[152]Donne will make a similar move in his sermons. In words that best sum up his position on preaching, Donne asserts, "There is no salvation but by faith, nor faith but by hearing, nor hearing but by preaching; and they that think meanliest of the Keyes of the Church, and speake faintliest of the Absolution of the Church, will yet allow, That those Keyes lock, and unlock in preaching; That Absolution is conferred or withheld in Preaching, That the proposing of the promises of the Gospel is in Preaching, is that binding and loosing on earth, which bindes and looses in heaven" (*Sermons* 7: 320).

[153]As Anne Barbeau Gardiner observes in "Donne and the Real Presence of the Absent Lover," Donne uses the phrase "true Transubstantiation" in the Fourth Prebend Sermon. When he employs this Catholic term, however, it is applied "not to the sacrament of the altar but to the sacrament just as it is received by the worthy communicant." Donne is deemphasizing the role of the priest here. His actions do not so much count. As Gardiner notes, "by adding the word *true* to *Transubstantiation,* Donne ... distinguishes his view from that of Catholics who believe the Transubstantiation also involves a change in the substances of the bread and wine, a change which happens before and continues after the moment of communion, making it possible to reserve the sacrament in the tabernacle on the altar and to worship it apart from the Lord's Supper" (118-19).

[154]Bald notes that "Donne was trying hard to gain an appointment of some sort, [and] about March 20, 1614 he wrote to Somerset asking explicitly for the ambassadorship to Venice" (290).

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That Donne makes so much of the minister's role as "Embassador to God" supports Arthur Marotti's reading of the Tilman poem and is equally important for my own understanding of Donne's larger project of self-fashioning. Marotti makes a case that like most of Donne's works, "To Mr Tilman" ought to be read as a "coterie poem," in that Donne employs it "to comment, for a knowledgeable audience, on his socio-political condition, as well as on his private spiritual state" (248). In the Tilman poem Donne "allowed his current secular concerns with ambition and preferment to intrude upon -- or rather to be translated into the language of -- sacred verse" (251).[155] In this sense, he is reversing the poetic process which Southwell advocated and advanced. For Southwell, secular forms served as a vehicle for sacred, priestly ends. Donne seizes upon sacred verse as an opportunity for "wrastling" with private matters. When Donne compares himself favorably to a monarch, equating ordination with "Coronation" (18), his sacred verse surely seems "contaminated by self-interest" (Marotti 251).[156] So much of the Tilman poem is taken up with foregrounding the "gainings" and "advantages" which ministers enjoy, that it ought to be read as "an attempt to reaffirm self-worth and regain a measure

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[155]Marotti interprets the whole of Donne's sacred verse as politically motivated in the sense that in writing religious poems Donne was out to ingratiate himself with James I. He observes that "from the start of James's reign, religious verse ... assumed a higher place in the hierarchy of genres, ... [and] Donne responded to the changed socio-cultural conditions in turning to the composition of religious verse. The very act of composing sacred verse in the reign of a monarch who himself had written religious poetry and especially favored pious and polemical writing was itself a political gesture" (246).

[156]As Debora Shuger points out, Donne also likens preachers to kings in his sermons: "What a coronation is our taking of orders, by which God makes us a royal priesthood? And what an inthronation is the coming up to the pulpit, where God invests his servant with his ordinance?" (*Sermons* 7:4).

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of control" (253). As I argued above, there is solid evidence for suggesting that Donne even goes so far as to create the fiction of "Lay-scornings of the ministry" in order to prove his "bravery" (47). Whereas Tilman's own poem emphasized humility, a traditional Christian virtue which a minister might want to model for his congregation, Donne's response is shot through with self-centered concerns. In this sense, its purpose is hardly pastoral. As in other of his religious poems, such as "Spit in my face, ye Jewes," where Donne asserts that his sins are more grave than the crucifixion itself, he can be justly accused in the Tilman poem of "overdramatizing the self" (Marotti 256).

Donne wrote "To Mr Tilman" three years after his own ordination, while still awaiting a major ecclesiastical appointment. His family was growing rapidly, as were the economic pressures which they brought to bear upon him. Donne had hoped for better when he was finally persuaded to pursue a career in the Anglican church. In the years leading up to his ordination, Donne several times refers to himself as "nothing." Living at Mitcham with his wife he would write,

> I would fain do something; but that I cannot tell what, is no wonder. For to chuse is to do: but to be no part of any body, is to be nothing. At most, the greatest persons, are but great wens, and excrescences; men of wit and delightful conversation, but as moales for ornament, except they be so incorporated into the body of the world, that they contribute something to the sustenation of the whole... Such as I am, rather a sickness and disease of the world than any part of it. (*Letters* 50-51)

There is good reason for supposing, then, that Donne, after finding his voice, agreed to

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become a cure of souls partly in order to cure himself. He must have been all the more frustrated, therefore, when his ordination resulted in no appreciable rise in status. In the Tilman poem Donne seems to be compensating for such frustrations. I want, however, to make a further point. Regardless of whether he met with the kind of self-affirming, if not self-aggrandizing, success he so desired from his career in the Church of England, he was anxious about the validity of his ordination because he was so steeped in the traditions of the church of Rome. Such anxiety is another reason, I think, for Donne's "overdramatizing" and other efforts at compensating for that which he suspects he lacks: the sacramental priestly character conferred through valid ordination.

In her study of Donne's "absolutist theology," Debora Shuger observes that in his preaching he "destabalizes" scriptural texts by means of a very idiosyncratic form of interpretation so that his sermons deliberately "produce anxieties in order to disclose the power of the priest and to create a dependency on that power" (207). Donne repeatedly tries to convince his congregation that "one escapes from uncertainty by submission to power, especially priestly power."[157] Shuger reaches a conclusion which will serve to introduce my own:

> Whatever his conscious motives, Donne places church and priest rather than some objective and impersonal text at the center of the redemptive

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[157]Shuger's insights are confirmed, for example, when Donne describes God's ministers as " an earth-quake, and shake an earthly soule; They are the sonnes of thunder, and scatter a cloudy conscience; They are the fall of waters, and carry with them whole congregations; 3000 at a Sermon, 5000 at a Sermon, a whole City, such a City as Nineveh at a Sermon; and they are as the roaring of a Lion, where the Lion of the tribe of Juda, cries down the Lion that seekes whom he may devour" (*Sermons* 7: 396).

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> process as it unfolds in history. The power of the Church of England and its preacher finds a place in virtually every one of Donne's sermons. The minister is "the mediator between Christ and man".... The preacher "speakes in the person of God himselfe." A preacher is like a king, Donne's highest form of compliment.... Donne never tires of reminding his congregations of the majesty, dignity, and authority of the preaching ministry; he places far less emphasis on its sacramental role. (208)

It is my contention that Donne's motives, conscious or otherwise, for de-emphasizing the sacramental role of the minister have to do with his doubts about his ability to validly perform that role.[158] As noted above, Donne mostly avoids references to the sacrificial function of the priest once he is ordained. He prefers to stress the power that belongs to him as a preacher. This makes good sense if Donne's poetry is, in fact, "an attempt to reaffirm self-worth and regain a measure of self-control." Why would Donne, so desirous of fashioning himself a man successful and secure, write about that which he doubts he can do? In the letter previously cited, where he writes of his desire to "be incorporated into the body of the world" and thereby "contribute something to the sustenation of the whole," Donne equates his inability to "do something" with "being

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[158]It is interesting in this regard that Walton describes Donne's pastoral activities without ever mentioning a sacrament. As Mueller reports, "Walton also comments briefly on the pastoral life of a man whose ministerial activity, in contrast to George Herbert's, is usually thought of in terms of its preaching rather than its pastoral work. We are told that Donne frequently visited the afflicted; and that he displayed many evidences of charity to prisoners, penurious scholars, and others whose financial needs were known to him; and that his willing and successful efforts at reconciliation frequently resolved the family difficulties of friends" (33).

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nothing."[159] For this reason, he stops writing about priests offering sacrifice. Offering sacrifice is a thing he suspects that he cannot do, and to be reminded of this self-imposed inability is to run the risk of becoming "Un-done."

The doubts about the validity of Anglican orders which are encoded in Donne's Tilman poem, as well as his self-dramatizing efforts at overcoming them, support Stephen Greenblatt's assertion that "any achieved identity always contains within itself the signs of its own subversion or loss" (*Self-Fashioning* 9). Donne acquiesced to ordination in the hope of finding some solid ground on which he might "establish a sense of personal order [and] a characteristic mode of address to the world." In fashioning himself an Anglican priest, Donne was seeking some stability in the midst of the rapid and radical changes affecting the structures which "governed the generation of identities" in the early seventeenth century. As his poetry witnesses, however, that stability seems to have eluded him, despite an ever-increasing confidence in the saving power of his own voice. Try as he might to fashion himself "Embassador to God and destinie," a network of forces, including his family and the faith which had first fashioned him, would continually cause him to question his credentials.

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[159]That "doing something" and "being nothing" refer specifically to vocation is evinced in Donne's first sermon as the Vicar of St. Dunstan's in the West: "Every man is bound to marry himself to a profession, to a calling: God hath brought him from being nothing by creating him, but he resolves himself into nothing again, if he take no calling upon him" (Cf. Mueller 40).

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Conclusion

At the start of this dissertation I admitted that my aim was to arrive at a fragmentary, rather than a "unified interpretive vision" of the poetry of Robert Southwell and John Donne. I began with a desire to read their works through the particular lens of the priesthood and its attendant anxieties because I had a hunch that such an approach could be an integral part of a larger effort to reevaluate the religious aspects of Renaissance literature. To date, most critics have paid scant attention to the fact that these two poets, as well as other important writers of the period, were priests. For reasons yet to be explored sufficiently, many men who took orders, both Catholics and Anglicans, also took to writing poetry. Malcolm Mackenzie Ross, with his usual penchant for the hyperbolic, claims that "every Anglican parson of the seventeenth century must have written at least one volume of verse" (ix). At the very least, a quick survey of the most significant early modern English authors certainly reveals that their ranks included clerics such as Robert Herrick, George Herbert, Thomas Treherne, and William Alabaster.

Herrick, born in 1591, was ordained a priest in 1623, and despite a somewhat checkered personal reputation, he served as Dean Prior in Devonshire until 1627, when he was ejected from office by revolutionary forces. After the Restoration he returned to that post and served in it until his death in 1674. Herbert's exemplary service as rector in Bemerton from his ordination in 1630 until his death in 1633 hardly needs to be documented here. That he wrote out of a keen awareness of his presbyteral identity is evinced by the titles which he gave to two of his works, "A Priest to the Temple" and "The Country Parson, His Character, and Rule of Holy Life." Treherne was ordained in

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1660 and held the post of rector at Credenhill in Herefordshire for fourteen years. During that time he wrote prose as well as poetry which was specifically concerned with theological questions. His works include an anti-Catholic treatise entitled *Roman Forgeries* and a lengthy *Christian Ethics*. Alabaster, born in 1568 and ordained in the Anglican church in 1596, is a particularly complicated priestly poet. He changed religions so many times that even his closest friends could not keep up with him. One of these, John Chamberlain, referred to him as "the double or treble turncoat" (Story and Gardner, *Sonnets of William Alabaster* xxi). Upon leaving the Anglican church for the first of several times, Alabaster made the *Spiritual Exercises* under the direction of no less celebrated a Jesuit that John Gerard. He eventually fled England with the intention of entering the Society of Jesus. Several years later, however, after denouncing members of the Society as traitors, he returned to his homeland and managed to secure a benefice which John Donne had hoped to gain. Writing to Goodyer shortly after he had taken orders, Donne complained that "Mr. Alabaster hath got of the King the Deans best Living worth above 300 L" (Story and Gardner xxi). Because of his notorious maneuvering, Alabaster was one of the era's most famous or infamous priests, irrespective of how widely or well his poetry was known. Consciously or not, this cast of clerical characters took up Southwell's challenge when he invited "some skillfuller wits to ... begin some finer piece, wherein it may be seen how well verse and virtue sute together" (*The Author to his loving Cosen*). A more complete study of the relationship between priesthood and poetry in the Renaissance would have to attend to them all.

Unlike their contemporaries, whose knowledge of these men was informed more

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by an awareness of their ministerial than their literary efforts, postmodern readers have tended to avert from the fact that these poets were ordained at all. Most Englishmen in the seventeenth century would have been likely to identify Southwell, Donne, and these other priestly poets in terms of what they did rather than on the basis of what they wrote. Robert Southwell was a member of the Society of Jesus for seventeen years and a Catholic priest for more than half of these. His death was on account of this identity, and it was obviously a newsworthy event; so much so that the Queen herself took notice of it. John Donne was an Anglican priest for sixteen years and for ten of those he served as the Dean of Saint Paul's Cathedral, preaching regularly from the most prominent pulpit in England. If these two poets were known primarily to their contemporaries as priests, then the least we can do is to read what they wrote with an eye toward what their sacerdotal identity might have meant to them. Given the amount of time Southwell and Donne spent discerning, preparing for, and pursuing a vocation to the priesthood, it seems very likely that their writings would have been influenced by that vocation and that their poetry will reveal traces of such influence. We ought not to bracket off religious materials from cultural and literary analysis, even -- and especially -- if those materials make for encounters with a kind of radical alterity; and in order to make this point I have been deliberately foregrounding the relationship between priesthood and poetry.

All this being said, however, I want to reiterate that my view of these priestly poets is a fragmentary one. To read their works against the background of ordination is necessary but not sufficient for understanding them in all their complexity. Obligations stemming from other roles and relationships made claims on Southwell and Donne, and

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some of these obligations were obviously prior to their priesthood. A legendary American Jesuit novice master, Thomas Gavigan, was famous for reminding his charges of this very fact. "You are a human being first," Gavigan would say, "and then a male, and then a Christian, and then a Roman Catholic, and then a Jesuit, and then a priest, and never forget that order." Obviously, Gavigan's advice to budding young religious should be taken into consideration by someone who reads Southwell from the perspective of priesthood; and with a couple of slight emendations to the list, it could benefit a like-minded reader of Donne as well. These poets were other things before they became priests. They were sons, brothers, and Englishmen of a certain social class; and they remained so after their ordinations. Nevertheless, a good deal of their authorial energy was spent analyzing, negotiating, interpreting and appropriating the religious and specifically sacerdotal materials they took in hand. No reading of their poetry would be complete without some consideration of how and why that energy was spent.

While scholarship on Southwell is admittedly sparse, few if any critics have considered him in light of the Jesuits' Institute or "way of proceeding." Such a consideration is crucial, however, in that Southwell took to writing poetry only after he recognized its inherent ministerial potential. Because of his understanding of the work proper to a Jesuit priest, he could view poetry primarily as a solution to various pastoral problems. Only secondarily, if at all, does he employ verse as an opportunity for personal exploration or self-expression. In those rare instances when he does refer to some personal issue, such as his fear of betraying the church under the threat of persecution or torture, he attempts to tie up his own "loose ends" while simultaneously striving to be apostolically

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effective. Even when he comes closest to revealing something about himself, Southwell's poetry is first and foremost an extension of his vocation. For him poetry was always one among several ministries which were meant to further his work as a priest, and in pursuing all of these ministries he was fundamentally interested in promoting conversion by means of consolation. With this end in mind, and firmly convinced of the compatibility of nature and grace, Southwell will adapt whatever he finds at his disposal, including the "clumsy fourteener" of "A Childe, My Choice" and other forms of popular verse (Scallon 111). At times this means he is willing to sacrifice creativity for the sake of consolation, but this is consistent with his understanding of the relationship between priesthood and poetry. The latter was always a function of and subservient to the former. Moreover, he was the first to admit that this was the case. He considered his verses to be nothing more than "a few course threads" whose very meanness might inspire more skilled poets to do him one better:

> I have heere layd a few course threads together.... Blame me not ... though I send you a blame-worthy present, in which the most that can commend it, is the good will of the writer. neither Arte nor invention, giving it any credit. (*The Author to his loving Cousin* 24-30)

While Southwell seems remarkably free of pretensions when it comes to the artistic merits of his "Catholic though broken speeches," he was nevertheless interested in making them available to the public (*Epistle of Comfort* 4). As noted, he took pains to establish a secret printing press upon his arrival in England and, as Nancy Pollard Brown reports, within a year or two of his landing in London "his achievement as a writer was already

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making his influence widespread amongst Catholic families of great distinction" (Introduction xxix). This public aspect of his work is of considerable importance, I think, in terms of grasping his intention as a priestly writer as well as his understanding of the nature of religious poetry. In response to the predicament of his co-religionists as he discovered it upon his arrival in England, Southwell writes poetry in which he turns the Ignatian *Exercises* into public meditations meant to stir up the reader as much as himself. Worried about the diminishment of sacramental practice, for instance, he makes Loyola's meditations speak to the necessity of auricular confession and he underscores its consoling power. It may not be what Southwell most needs to hear or write about, but his poetry is more apostolically than autobiographically driven.

In his poetry, Southwell wants to get out of what he hopes is God's way. In this he is like John Henry Newman's priest whose sacramental presence is marked by a kind of personal absence or anonymity. In order for Christ to be really present in a ritual, according to Newman, the personality of the priest must be diminished. "The preacher is different from the minister of the sacraments," Newman writes, "[in that] the latter is at it were impersonal ... [whereas] the former is personal or definite" (*Idea of a University* 412). Perhaps Southwell learned this lesson about the need for anonymity from Ignatius Loyola. In his instructions to directors of the *Exercises,* the Jesuits' founder insisted upon the importance of getting out of God's way when helping people to pray:

> He who is giving the Exercises ought not to influence him who is receiving them.... In the *Spiritual Exercises*, when seeking the Divine Will, it is more fitting and much better, that the Creator and Lord Himself should

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> communicate himself to his devout soul, inflaming it with his love and praise, and disposing it for the way in which it will better serve him in the future. So, he who is giving the *Exercises* should ... leave the Creator to act immediately with the creature, and the creature with its Creator and Lord. [15]

While it seems paradoxical, Southwell's poems aim at being both public and anonymous. The advantage on both counts is that he wants his work to serve as a means by which his readers can enter into an experience of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus without passing through or being distracted by the details of the author's own life. According to the theology which serves to ground Southwell's poetic, such participation in the events of salvation history is very possible. Southwell does not write poems which invite readers to simply observe the life of Christ, much less the life of the poet himself. He writes them for much the same reason Loyola wrote the *Exercises*. Through Southwell's poems, as through Ignatius's prayers, people are encouraged to enter into the mystery which is represented in the text. Southwell's operative notion in all this might be called, then, a poetic of participation.

It is interesting in this regard to note the remarks of other readers of Southwell. Christopher Devlin, for example, argues that the Jesuit's poetry "revives the grand tradition of medieval religious devotion"; and, in a similar vein, Louis Martz describes Southwell's writing in words that would aptly characterize a Cycle play:

> What is most important here is the easy colloquial style into which the composition falls: the practice of dramatizing theological points, after the

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> manner of Gospel parables, has become almost second nature to the meditation. It is this habit of feeling theological issues as part of a concrete dramatic scene that [Southwell] stresses as all important for the beginning of a meditation. (29-30)

The "dramatizing" and "feeling" which Martz claims are typical of Southwell have as their aim the creation of affective avenues by which readers can enter into the "theological point" at hand. Martz's implied comparison between the mediative poems and the Mystery Cycles may be more telling than he imagined. In both cases it was hoped that readers and audiences would realize how, by means of poems and plays, the major events of salvation history were happening here and now. Just as the medieval religious drama aimed at including the spectator as an actor within the play, so are Southwell's poems constructed for the purpose of raising the reader from observer to participant in the religious experiences they represent. In order that this might happen, Southwell clears a space for others to put themselves into his poems. Insofar as he appears in his poems at all, he makes a point of standing on common ground. There is little room in his verse for the idiosyncratic or the controversial. Southwell understands that the introduction of personal or polemical issues would compromise the kind of artistic anamnesis which is the purpose of his poetry, a poetry grounded in sacramental confidence.

Such confidence, however, is hardly characteristic of John Donne's religious poetry. As he reads his way out of the Catholic church of his ancestors, he tries to write his way into the Church of England. Inherent in such an attempt is the need to question the efficacy of any human efforts to merit God's grace. As he "wrastles" with the influence of

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continental Protestant thinkers, especially John Calvin, Donne experiences a kind of spiritual paralysis which he overcomes only after he can believe in the saving power of his own voice. Deprived of and doubtful about all but two of the traditional seven Catholic sacraments, the poet can embrace ordained ministry only after he experiences salvation by articulation. This causes him to rethink what it is that he can and must do for God and his contemporaries. If he cannot fulfill the role of priest as it was defined in Roman Catholic doctrine, he can raise his voice in the pulpit. Donne eventually becomes convinced that this voice is powerful enough "to lift men and women [and himself] outside space, and project them beyond the boundaries of time, launching humankind from the realm of the profane ... in the hopes of arriving at a more sacred place" (Frontain 9-10). Once he discovers the agency inherent in articulation, he can serve as God's "trumpet" or, better still, "God Embassador." As a result, he virtually stops writing poems for the sake of writing sermons.

Donne's religious poems are the record of a long and difficult process of vocational discernment. I am convinced that they do not reveal the kind of scepticism that other critics see in them, so much as they show a deeply religious man trying to make his way through "the whole body of divinity controverted between [the Anglican] and the Romane Church." This effort is informed by a great deal of religious integrity, an integrity especially hard to come by for a man whose loyalties were so torn by complicated allegiances to family and faith. Until he understands what he can for God, Donne avoids taking orders. Once he possesses that understanding, he is able to redefine the priestly office for himself. His operative definition, however, does not entirely free him from

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lingering doubts born of his family's Catholic legacy, and for this reason he largely avoids references to sacraments and sacrifice after he takes Anglican orders.

In the religious poetry Donne wrote during the years leading up to his ordination, he fashions himself a priest on his own terms. That this is the case makes for verses that are full of personal references, some of which can seem quite peculiar. Donne never claims to be a systematic theologian, however. Nor is his poetry, like Southwell's, written for the sake of apostolic ends. It is written so that he can carve out a space for himself. This personal and sacerdotal space must be found in the midst of a crowded arena where a contentious family, a nation undergoing a series of religious sea-changes, and two churches engaged in a life-threatening struggle all vie for the poet's attention and allegiance. Ultimately, the space which Donne carves out for himself takes the shape of a pulpit from which he can preach a word that is as much his own as it is God's. On the basis of the fact that we can watch Donne do all this in his religious poetry, it is possible to distinguish his poetic from Southwell's on at least one important score. If Southwell's operating principle can be described as a poetic of participation, then Donne's might be called a poetic of observation. His religious verses do not invite the reader to stand in the poet's place in order to engage the mystery at hand. To the contrary, they put the reader at a remove from the action. Readers watch Donne "wrastle" with God while searching his own soul for a satisfactory definition of sacerdotal identity.

In the preceding chapter on John Donne, I have often taken issue with the poet's first biographer, Isaak Walton. I have tried to point out how Walton and many of those who came after him misread the poet on account of the fact that they write out his

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Catholic connections. One instance of such misreading, however, seems to suit my ends. In describing the earliest portrait of Donne, for which the poet sat in 1591, Walton observes,

> I have seen one picture of him, drawn by a curious hand at his age of eighteen; with his sword and what other adornments might then suit with the present fashions of youth, and the giddy gaieties of that age: and his Motto then was,
>
> *How much shall I be chang'd,*
>
> *Before I am chang'd.*

As Dennis Flynn points out, "Walton has mistranslated Donne's Spanish motto -- *Antes muerto que mudado* -- which actually means 'Rather dead than changed,' an unwaveringly stoic asseveration far in spirit from Walton's lines of elegiac wonderment" (*John Donne and the Ancient Catholic Nobility* 2). Walton's misreading in this particular case is actually more descriptive of Donne than the motto which the poet adopted for himself. He was very much changed in the years during which he engaged in writing poems of vocational discernment, and not only did he change personally but so did his understanding of priesthood.

It would be too simple to say that Donne embraced the official Anglican notion of orders. Even if such a notion had been clearly articulated at this point in the history of the Church of England, Donne's peculiar take on the priestly office would be clear enough. One of the most significant changes in Donne's understanding has to do with the efficaciousness of his own voice. He writes his way out of spiritual paralysis and he wants

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to put his saving words at the service of others. Because he can lift himself up by his own words through poetry, he begins to imagine that it might be possible to lift up a congregation through preaching. It was to this end that he devoted the rest of his life. While Walton is wrong, I think, about Donne's struggles with religion, he is inadvertently right about how much the poet had to be changed before he could accept orders.

Soon after Donne's ordination, if not on the very day itself, he signaled in a poem written for George Herbert the kind of change which had occurred in his self-understanding.[160] Whereas in the Tilman poem Donne discusses the effects of ordination in terms of "Christ's new stampe," in "To Mr. George Herbert, with my Seal, of the Anchor and Christ," he imagines that he has been "adopted in God's family" (3). As a result, he wants to exchange his "poor" family's "old Coat" for a new "Crest." He does so in order to acknowledge God's "new blessings" on him (12), and to catechize his young friend (20). That he draws an analogy between his ordination and membership in a new family is not surprising. He must have suspected how the news of his ordination in the Anglican church would have been greeted by his Catholic relatives. He might need to be "adopted" because he has run the risk of being disowned by the family which raised him.

The poet exchanges the old Donne family seal, "a Sheafe of Snakes," for an image of the cross that grows into an anchor. The image seems related to what might well be the two elusive goals for which Donne has long been searching, salvation and security. Ordination promises some semblance of both. At the same time, however, Donne admits

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[160]In dating this poem I am relying on the argument presented by Helen Gardner in Appendix G of *The Divine Poems* 138-47.

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that despite ordination, the old man remains:

> God gives new blessings, and yet leaves the old;
>
> The Serpent, may, as wise, my pattern be;
>
> My poison, as he feeds on dust, that's me. (12-14)

While yearning for the new as symbolized in his adopted seal, Donne still feels the pull of old patterns. They are a kind of "poison" for which ordination is not an entirely sufficient antidote. He will continue to live with and write out of the tensions between new and old, between a sometimes paralyzing awareness of his own sinfulness and the saving power of his own voice, between inherited Catholic patterns and an adopted Anglican priesthood. He has enough integrity to know that these tensions constitute the "Crosse" which he must bear, but it is lightened by the conviction that this same cross is also his "cure" (16).

Finally, Donne's poem to Herbert acknowledges that they belong to different generations. The tensions experienced by Donne and his contemporaries will not plague Herbert and his to the same degree. They will have their own crosses, and Donne urges them to take them up: "Bear, as thou shouldst do/ Thy Crosse, and that Crosse grows an Anchor too" (7-8). The anxieties which will impact upon Donne's young friend, and the ways in which he will attempt to negotiate them in and through his poetry, will be generated by a different set of circumstances, one which is peculiar to those who will experience the next series of events to shape early modern religion in England. It is these anxieties and circumstances which will color Herbert's own efforts at sacerdotal self-fashioning, and his efforts, as well as those of other priest-poets of the Renaissance, merit further investigation. This is certainly the case if, as I have tried to suggest, a study of the

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relationship between the priestly and poetic vocations offers a crucial and fresh opening to some of the major issues in Renaissance life and culture.

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